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A MYSTERY OF THE CAMPAGNA

AND

A SHADOW ON A WAVE

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MYSTERY OF THE CAMPAGNA

AND

A SHADOW ON A WAVE

Rabe, Ann (Crawford) von

VON DEGEN

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A MYSTERY OF THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

MARTIN DETAILLE'S ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED AT THE VIGNA MARZIALI.

MARCELLO'S voice is pleading with me now, perhaps because after years of separation I have met an old acquaintance who had a part in his strange story. I have longing to tell it, and have sked Monsieur Sutton to help ne. He noted down the circumstances at the time, and he s willing to join his share to

mine, that Marcello may b remembered.

One day, it was in spring, h appeared in my little studi among the laurels and gree alleys of the Villa Medic "Come, *mon enfant*," he sai "put up your paints"; and h unceremoniously took my palett out of my hand. "I have a ca waiting outside, and we a going in search of a hermitage. He was already washing m brushes as he spoke, and th softened my heart, for I hate t do it myself. Then he pulle off my velvet jacket and toc down my respectable coat fro a nail on the wall. I let hi dress me like a child. W always did his will, and he kne it, and in a moment we we sitting in the cab, driving throug the Via Sistina on our way t the Porta San Giovanni, whith he had directed the coachman t go.

I must tell my story as I ca for though I have been told b

my comrades, who cannot know very well that I can speak good English, writing it is another thing. Monsieur Sutton has asked me to use his tongue, because he has so far forgotten mine that he will not trust himself in it, though he has promised to correct my mistakes, that what I have to tell you may not seem ridiculous, and make people laugh when they read of Marcello. I tell him I wish to write this for my countrymen, not his; but he reminds me that Marcello had many English friends who still live, and that the English do not forget as we do. It is of no use to reason with him, for neither do they yield as we do, and so I have consented to his wish. I think he has a reason which he does not tell me—but let it go. I will translate it all into my own language, for my own people. Your English phrases seem to me to be always walking sideways, or trying to look round the corner, or stand

upon their heads, and they have as many little tails as a kite. I will try not to have recourse to my own language, but he must pardon me if I forget myself. He may be sure I do not do it to offend him. Now that I have explained so much, let me go on.

When we had passed out of the Porta San Giovanni, the coachman drove as slowly as he liked. The pay is more outside the gates, and they always pretend then that their horses are tired, and creep as slowly as possible; but Marcello was never practical. How could he be, I ask you, with an Opera in his head? So we crawled along, and he gazed dreamily before him. At last, when we had reached the part where the little villas and vineyards begin, he began to look about him.

You all know how it is out there; iron gates, with rusty names or initials over them, and beyond them straight walks, bor-

dered with roses and lavender, leading up to a forlorn little casino, with trees and a wilderness behind it, sloping down to the Campagna; lonely enough to be murdered in and no one to hear you cry. We stopped at several of these gates and Marcello stood looking in, but none of the places were to his taste. He seemed not to doubt that he might have whatever pleased him, but nothing did so. He would jump out and run to the gate, and return saying, "The shape of those windows would disturb my inspiration," or, "That yellow paint would make me fail my duet in the second act"; and once he liked the air of the house well enough, but there were marigolds growing in the walk, and he hated them. So we drove on and on, until I thought we should find nothing more to reject. At last we came to one which suited him, though it was terribly lonely, and I should have fancied it very

agaçant to live so far away from the world with nothing but those melancholy olives and green oaks—ilexes, you call them—for company.

"I shall live here and become famous!" he said, decidedly, as he pulled the iron rod which rang a great bell inside. We waited, and then he rang again very impatiently and stamped his foot.

"No one lives here, *mon vieux!* Come, it is getting late, and it is so damp out here, and you know that the damp for a tenor voice—" He stamped his foot again and interrupted me, angrily.

"Why, then, have you got a tenor! You are stupid! a bass would be more sensible; nothing hurts it. But you have not got one, and you call yourself my friend! Go home without me." How could I, so far on foot? "Go and sing your lovesick songs to your lean English misses! They will thank you

with a cup of abominable tea, and you will be in Paradise! This is *my* Paradise, and I shall stay until the angel comes to open it!"

He was very cross and unreasonable, and those were just the times when one loved him most, so I waited and enveloped my throat in my pocket-handkerchief and sang a passage or two just to prevent my voice from becoming stiff in that damp air.

"Be still! silence yourself!" he cried. "I cannot hear if any one is coming."

Some one came at last, a rough-looking sort of keeper, or *guardiano*, as they are called there, who looked at us as though he thought we were mad. One of us certainly was, but it was not I. Marcello spoke pretty good Italian, with a French accent, it is true, but the man understood him, especially as he held his purse in his hand. I heard him say a great many impetu-

ously persuasive things all in a breath, then he slipped a gold piece into the *guardiano's* horny hand, and the two turned toward the house, the man shrugging his shoulders in a resigned sort of way, and Marcello called out to me over his shoulder:

"Go home in the cab, or you will be late for your horrible English party! I am going to stay here to-night." *Ma foi!* I took his permission and left him; for a tenor voice is as tyrannical as a jealous woman. Besides, I was furious, and yet I laughed. His was the artist temperament, and appeared to us by turns absurd, sublime, and intensely irritating; but this last never for long, and we all felt that were we more like him our pictures would be worth more. I had not got as far as the city gate when my temper had cooled, and I began to reproach myself for leaving him in that lonely place with his purse full of money, for he was not poor at

all, and tempting the dark *guardiano* to murder him. Nothing could be easier than to kill him in his sleep and bury him away somewhere under the olive trees or in some old vault of a ruined catacomb, so common on the borders of the Campagna. There were sure to be a hundred such convenient places. I stopped the coachman and told him to turn back, but he shook his head and said something about having to be in the Piazza of St. Peter at eight o'clock. His horse began to go lame, as though he had understood his master and were his accomplice. What could I do? I said to myself that it was fate, and let him take me back to the Villa Medici, where I had to pay him a pretty sum for our crazy expedition, and then he rattled off, the horse not lame at all, leaving me bewildered at this strange afternoon.

I did not sleep well that night, though my tenor song had been

applauded, and the English misses had caressed me much. I tried not to think of Marcello, and he did not trouble me much until I went to bed; but then I could not sleep, as I have told you. I fancied him already murdered, and being buried in the darkness by the *guardiano*. I saw the man dragging his body, with the beautiful head thumping against the stones, down dark passages, and at last leaving it, all bloody and covered with earth, under a black arch in a recess, and coming back to count the gold pieces. But then again I fell asleep, and dreamed that Marcello was standing at the gate and stamping his foot; and then I slept no more, but got up as soon as the dawn came, and dressed myself, and went to my studio at the end of the laurel walk. I took down my painting jacket, and remembered how he had pulled it off my shoulders. I took up the brushes he had washed for me;

they were only half cleaned after all, and stiff with paint and soap. I felt glad to be angry with him, and *sacré*'d a little, for it made me sure that he was yet alive if I could scold at him. Then I pulled out my study of his head for my picture of Mucius Scævola holding his hand in the flame, and then I forgave him; for who could look upon that face and not love it?

I worked with the fire of friendship in my brush, and did my best to endow the features with the expression of scorn and obstinacy I had seen at the gate. It could not have been more suitable to my subject! Had I seen it for the last time? You will ask me why I did not leave my work and go to see if anything had happened to him, but against this there were several reasons. Our yearly exhibition was not far off and my picture was barely painted in, and my comrades had sworn that it would not be ready. I

was expecting a model for the King of the Etruscans; a man who cooked chestnuts in the Piazza Montanara, and who had consented to stoop to sit to me as a great favor; and then, to tell the truth, the morning was beginning to dispel my fancies. I had a good northern light to work by, with nothing sentimental about it, and I was not fanciful by nature; so when I sat down to my easel I told myself that I had been a fool, and that Marcello was perfectly safe; the smell of the paints helping me to feel practical again. Indeed, I thought every moment that he would come in, tired of his caprice already, and even was preparing and practicing a little lecture for him. Some one knocked at my door, and I cried "*Entrez!*" thinking it was he at last; but no, it was Pierre Magnin.

"There is a curious man, a man of the country, who wants you," he said. "He has your

address on a dirty piece of paper in Marcello's handwriting, and a letter for you, but he wont give it up. He says he must see '*il* Signor Martino.' He'd make a superb model for a murderer! Come and speak to him, and keep him while I get a sketch of his head."

I followed Magnin through the garden, and outside, for the porter had not allowed him to enter. I found the *guardiano* of yesterday. He showed his white teeth, and said, "Good day, signore," like a Christian; and here in Rome he did not look half so murderous—only a stupid, brown, country fellow. He had a rough peasant-cart waiting, and he had tied up his shaggy horse to a ring in the wall. I held out my hand for the letter and pretended to find it difficult to read, for I saw Magnin standing with his sketch-book in the shadow of the entrance hall. The note said this: I have it still and I will copy it. It was

written in pencil on a leaf torn from his pocket-book:

"*Mon vieux!* I have passed a good night here, and the man will keep me as long as I like. Nothing will happen to me, except that I shall be divinely quiet, and I have already a famous *motif* in my head. Go to my lodgings and pack up some clothes and all my manuscripts, with plenty of music paper and a few bottles of Bordeaux, and give them to my messenger. Be quick about it.

"Fame is preparing to descend upon me! If you care to see me, do not come before eight days. The gate will not be opened if you come sooner. The *guardiano* is my slave, and he has instructions to kill any intruder who in the guise of a friend tries to get in uninvited. He will do it, for he has confessed to me that he has murdered three men already."

(Of course this was a joke. I knew Marcello's way.)

"When you come, go to the *poste restante* and fetch my letters. Here is my card to legitimate you. Don't forget pens and a bottle of ink! Your

"MARCELLO."

There was nothing for it but to jump into the cart, tell Magnin, who had finished his sketch, to lock up my studio, and go bumping off to obey these commands. We drove to his lodgings in the Via del Governo Vecchio, and there I made a bundle of all that I could think of; the landlady hindering me by a thousand questions about when the Signore would return. He had paid for the rooms in advance, so she had no need to be anxious about her rent. When I told her where he was, she shook her head, and talked a good deal about the bad air out there, and said, "Poor Signorino!" in a melancholy way, as though he were already buried, and looked mournfully after us from the window when we drove away. She irritated

me, and made me feel superst
tious. At the corner of the Vi
del Tritone I jumped down an
gave the man a franc out of pur
sentimentality, and cried afte
him, "Greet the Signore!" bu
he did not hear me, and jogge
away stupidly while I was long
ing to be with him. Marcell
was a cross to us sometimes, bu
we loved him always.

The eight days went by soone
than I had thought they would
and Thursday came, bright an
sunny, for my expedition. A
one o'clock I descended into th
Piazza di Spagna, and made
bargain with a man who had
well-fed horse, remembering hov
dearly Marcello's want of goo
sense had cost me a week ago
and we drove off at a good pac
to the Vigna Marziali, as I wa
almost forgetting to say that i
was called. My heart was beat
ing, though I did not know wh
I should feel so much emotion
When we reached the iron gate
the *guardiano* answered my ring

directly, and I had no sooner set foot in the long flower-walk than I saw Marcello hastening to meet me.

"I knew you would come," he said, drawing my arm within his, and so we walked toward the little gray house, which had a sort of portico and several balconies, and a sun-dial on its front. There were grated windows down to the ground floor, and the place, to my relief, looked safe and habitable. He told me that the man did not sleep there, but in a little hut down toward the Campagna, and that he, Marcello, locked himself in safely every night, which I was also relieved to know.

"What do you get to eat?" said I.

"Oh, I have goat's flesh, and fried beans and polenta, with pecorino cheese, and there is plenty of black bread and sour wine," he answered, smilingly. "You see, I am not starved."

"Do not overwork yourself,

mon vieux," I said; "you are worth more than your opera ever will be."

"Do I look overworked?" he said, turning his face to me in the broad, outdoor light. He seemed a little offended at my saying that about his opera, and I was foolish to do it.

I examined his face critically and he looked at me half defiantly. "No, not yet," I answered rather unwillingly, for I could not say that he did; but there was a restless, inward look in his eyes and an almost imperceptible shadow lay around them. It seemed to me as though the full temples had grown slightly hollow, and a sort of faint mist lay over his beauty, making it seem strange and far off. We were standing before the door and he pushed it open, the *guardiano* following us with slow loud-resounding steps.

"Here is my Paradise," said Marcello, and we entered the house, which was like all the

others of its kind. A hall, with stucco bas-reliefs, and a stairway adorned with antique fragments, gave access to the upper rooms. Marcello ran up the steps lightly, and I heard him lock a door somewhere above and draw out the key; then he came and met me on the landing.

"This," he said, "is my work-room," and he threw open a low door. The key was in the lock, so this room could not be the one I heard him close. "Tell me I shall not write like an angel here!" he cried. I was so dazzled by the flood of bright sunshine after the dusk of the passage, that I blinked like an owl at first, and then I saw a large room, quite bare, except for a rough table and chair, the chair covered with manuscript music.

"You are looking for the furniture," he said, laughing; "it is outside. Look here!" and he drew me to a rickety door of worm-eaten wood and coarse greenish glass, and flung it open

on to a rusty iron balcony. He was right; the furniture was outside: that is to say, a divine view met my eyes. The Sabine Mountains, the Alban Hills, the broad Campagna, with its mediæval towers and ruined aqueducts, and the open plain to the sea. All this glowing and yet calm in the sunlight. No wonder he could write there! The balcony ran round the corner of the house, and to the right I looked down upon an alley of ilexes, ending in a grove of tall laurel trees—very old, apparently. There were bits of sculpture and some ancient sarcophagi standing gleaming among them, and even from so high I could hear a little stream of water pouring from an antique mask into a long, rough trough. I saw the brown *guardiano* digging at his cabbages and onions, and I laughed to think that I could fancy him a murderer! He had a little bag of relics, which dangled to and fro over his sunburned breast, and he

looked very innocent when he sat down upon an old column to eat a piece of black bread with an onion which he had just pulled out of the ground, slicing it with a knife not at all like a dagger. But I kept my thoughts to myself, for Marcello would have laughed at them. We were standing together, looking down at the man as he drank from his hands at the running fountain, and Marcello now leaned down over the balcony, and called out a long "Ohé!" The lazy *guardiano* looked up, nodded, and then got up slowly from the stone where he had been half-kneeling to reach the jet of water.

"We are going to dine," Marcello explained. "I have been waiting for you." Presently we heard the man's heavy tread upon the stairs, and he entered, bearing a strange meal in a basket.

There came to light pecorino cheese made from ewe's milk, black bread of the consistency of

a stone, a great bowl of salad apparently composed of weeds, and a sausage which filled the room with a strong smell of garlic. Then he disappeared and came back with a dish full of ragged-looking goat's flesh cooked together with a mass of smoking polenta, and I am not sure that there was not oil in it.

"I told you I lived well, and now you see!" said Marcello. It was a terrible meal, but I had to eat it, and was glad to have some rough, sour wine to help me, which tasted of earth and roots. When we had finished, I said, "And your opera! How are you getting on?"

"Not a word about that!" he cried. "You see how I have written!" and he turned over a heap of manuscript; "but do not talk to me about it. I will not lose my ideas in words." This was not like Marcello, who loved to discuss his work, and I looked at him astonished.

"Come," he said, "we will go

down into the garden, and you shall tell me about the comrades. What are they doing? Has Magnin found a model for his Clytemnestra?"

I humored him, as I always did, and we sat upon a stone bench behind the house, looking toward the laurel grove, talking of the pictures and the students. I wanted to walk down the ilex alley, but he stopped me.

"If you are afraid of the damp, don't go down there," he said; "the place is like a vault. Let us stay here and be thankful for this heavenly view."

"Well, let us stay here," I answered, resigned as ever. He lit a cigar and offered me one in silence. If he did not care to talk, I could be still, too. From time to time he made some indifferent observation, and I answered it in the same tone. It almost seemed to me as though we, the old heart-comrades, had become strangers who had not known each other a week, or as though

we had been so long apart that we had grown away from each other. There was something about him which escaped me. Yes, the few days of solitude had indeed put years and a sort of shyness, or rather ceremony, between us! It did not seem natural to me now to clap him on the back, and make the old, harmless jokes at him. He must have felt the constraint, too, for we were like children who had looked forward to a game, and did not know now what to play at.

At six o'clock I left him. It was not like parting with Marcello. I felt rather as though I should find my old friend in Rome that evening, and here only left a shadowy likeness of him. He accompanied me to the gate, and pressed my hand, and for a moment the true Marcello looked out of his eyes; but we called out no last words to each other as I drove away. I had only said, "Let me know when you

want me; and he had said, "*Merci!*" and all the way back to Rome I felt a chill upon me, his hand had been so cold, and I thought and thought what could be the matter with him.

That evening I spoke out my anxiety to Pierre Magnin, who shook his head and declared that malaria fever must be taking hold of him, and that people often began to show it by being a little odd.

"He must not stay there! We must get him away as soon as possible," I cried.

"We know Marcello, and that nothing can make him stir against his will," said Pierre. "Let him alone, and he will get tired of his whim. It will not kill him to have a touch of malaria, and some evening he will turn up among us merry as ever."

But he did not. I worked hard at my picture and finished it, but for a few touches, and he had not yet appeared. Perhaps it was the extreme application, perhaps the

sitting out in that damp place, for I insist upon tracing it to something more material than emotion. Well, whatever it was, I fell ill; more ill than I had even been in my life. It was almost twilight when it overtook me, and I remember it distinctly, though I forget what happened afterward, or, rather, I never knew, for I was found by Magnin quite unconscious, and he has told me that I remained so for some time, and then became delirious, and talked of nothing but Marcello. I have told you that it was very nearly twilight; but just at the moment when the sun is gone the colors show in their true value. Artists know this, and I was putting last touches here and there to my picture, and especially to my head of Mucius Scævola, or, rather, Marcello.

The rest of the picture came out well enough; but that head, which should have been the principal one, seemed faded and sunk

in. The face appeared to grow paler and paler, and to recede from me; a strange veil spread over it, and the eyes seemed to close. I am not easily frightened, and I know what tricks some peculiar methods of color will play by certain lights, for the moment I spoke of had gone, and the twilight grayness had set in; so I stepped back to look well at it. Just then the lips, which had become almost white, opened a little, and sighed! An illusion, of course. I must have been very ill and quite delirious already, for to my imagination it was a real sigh, or, rather, a sort of exhausted gasp. Then it was that I fainted, I suppose, and when I came to myself I was in my bed, with Magnin and Monsieur Sutton standing by me, and a *Sœur de Charité* moving softly about among medicine bottles, and speaking in whispers. I stretched out my hands, and they were thin and yellow, with long, pale nails; and I heard Magnin's

voice, which sounded very far away, say, "*Dieu merci!*" And now Monsieur Sutton will tell you what I did not know until long afterward.

II.

ROBERT SUTTON'S ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED AT THE VIGNA MARZIALI.

I AM attached to Detaille, and was very glad to be of use to him, but I never fully shared his admiration for Marcello Souvestre, though I appreciated his good points. He was certainly very promising—I must say that. But he was an odd, flighty sort of fellow, not of the kind which we English care to take the trouble to understand. It is my business to write stories, but not having need of such characters I have never particularly studied them. As I say, I

was glad to be of use to Detaille, who is a thorough good fellow, and I willingly gave up my work to go and sit by his bedside. Magnin knew that I was a friend of his, and very properly came to me when he found that Detaille's illness was a serious one and likely to last for a long time. I found him perfectly delirious, and raving about Marcello.

"Tell me what the *motif* is! I know it is a *Marche Funèbre!*" And here he would sing a peculiar melody, which, as I have a knack at music, I noted down, it being like nothing I had heard before. The Sister of Charity looked at me with severe eyes; but how could she know that all is grist for our mill, and that observation becomes with us a mechanical habit? Poor Detaille kept repeating this curious melody over and over, and then would stop and seem to be looking at his picture, crying that it was fading away.

"Marcello! Marcello! You

are fading, too! Let me come to you!" He was as weak as a baby, and could not have moved from his bed unless in the strength of delirium.

"I cannot come!" he went on; "they have tied me down." And here he made as though he were trying to gnaw through a rope at his wrists, and then burst into tears. "Will no one go for me and bring me a word from you? Ah, if I could know that you are alive!"

Magnin looked at me. I knew what he was thinking. He would not leave his comrade, but I must go. I don't mind acknowledging that I did not undertake this unwillingly. To sit by Detaille's bedside and listen to his ravings enervated me, and what Magnin wanted struck me as troublesome but not uninteresting to one of my craft, so I agreed to go. I had heard all about Marcello's strange seclusion from Magnin and Detaille himself, who lamented over it openly, in his

simple way, at supper at the Academy, where I was a frequent guest.

I knew that it would be useless to ring at the gate of the Vigna Marziali. Not only should I not be admitted, but I should arouse Marcello's anger and suspicion, for I did not for a moment believe that he was not alive, though I thought it very possible that he was becoming a little crazy, as his countrymen are so easily put off their balance. Now, odd people are oddest late in the day and at evening time. Their nerves lose the power of resistance then, and the real man gets the better of them. So I determined to try to discover something at night, reflecting also that I should be safer from detection then. I knew his liking for wandering about when he ought to be in his bed, and I did not doubt that I should get a glimpse of him, and that was really all I needed.

My first step was to take a

long walk out of the Porta San Giovanni, and this I did in the early morning, tramping along steadily until I came to an iron gate on the right of the road, with "Vigna Marziali" over it; and then I walked straight on, never stopping until I had reached a little bushy lane running down toward the Campagna to the right. It was pebbly, and quite shut in by luxuriant ivy and elder bushes, and it bore deep traces of the last heavy rains. These had evidently been effaced by no footprints, so I concluded that it was little used. Down this path I made my way cautiously, looking behind and before me, from a habit contracted in my lonely wanderings in the Abruzzi. I had a capital revolver with me—an old friend—and I feared no man; but I began to feel a dramatic interest in my undertaking, and determined that it should not be crossed by any disagreeable surprises. The lane led me further down the plain than I had

reckoned upon, for the bushy edge shut out the view; and when I had got to the bottom and faced round, the Vigna Marziali was lying quite far to my left. I saw at a glance that behind the gray casino an alley of ilexes ended in a laurel grove; then there were plantations of kitchen stuff, with a sort of thatched cabin in their midst, probably that of the gardener. I looked about for a kennel, but saw none, so there was no watch-dog. At the end of this primitive kitchen garden was a broad patch of grass, bounded by a fence, which I could take at a spring. Now I knew my way, but I could not resist tracing it out a little further. It was well that I did so, for I found just within the fence a sunken stream, rather full at the time, in consequence of the rains, too deep to wade and too broad to jump. It struck me that it would be easy enough to take a board from the fence and lay it over for a bridge. I measured

the breadth with my eye, and decided that the board would span it; then I went back as I had come, and returned to find Detaille still raving.

As he could understand nothing, it seemed to me rather a fool's errand to go off in search of comfort for him; but a conscious moment might come, and, moreover, I began to be interested in my undertaking; and so I agreed with Magnin that I should go and take some food and rest, and return to the Vigna that night. I told my landlady that I was going into the country and should return the next day, and I went to Nazarri's and laid in a stock of sandwiches, and filled my flask with something they called sherry, for, though I was no great wine-drinker, I feared the night chill.

It was about seven o'olock when I started, and I retraced my morning's steps exactly. As I reached the lane, it occurred to me that it was still too light for

me to pass unobserved over the stream, and I made a place for myself under the hedge and lay down, quite screened by the thick curtain of tangled overhanging ivy.

I must have been out of training, and tired by the morning's walk, for I fell asleep. When I awoke it was night; the stars were shining, a dank mist made its way down my throat, and I felt stiff and cold. I took a pull at my flask, finding it nasty stuff, but it warmed me. Then I rang my repeater, which struck a quarter to eleven, got up, and shook myself free of the leaves and brambles, and went on down the lane. When I got to the fence I sat down and thought the thing over. What did I expect to discover? What *was* there to discover? Nothing! Nothing but that Marcello was alive; and that was no discovery at all, for I felt sure of it. I was a fool, and had let myself be allured by the mere stage non-

sense and mystery of the business, and a mouse would creep out of this mountain of precautions! Well, at least, I could turn it to account by describing my own absurd behavior in some story yet to be written, and, as it was not enough for a chapter, I would add to it by further experience. "Come along!" I said to myself. "You're an ass, but it may prove instructive." I raised the top board from the fence noiselessly. There was a stile just there, and the boards were easily moved. I laid down my bridge with some difficulty, and stepped carefully across, and made my way to the laurel grove as quickly and noiselessly as possible.

There all was thick darkness, and my eyes only grew slowly accustomed to it. After all, there was not much to see; some stone seats in a semi-circle, and some fragments of columns set upright with antique busts upon them. Then a little to the right a sort of arch, with apparently some

steps descending into the ground, probably the entrance to some discovered branch of a catacomb. In the midst of the inclosure, not a very large one, stood a stone table, deeply fixed in the earth. No one was there; of that I felt certain, and I sat down, having now got used to the gloom, and fell to eating my sandwiches, for I was desperately hungry.

Now that I had come so far, was nothing to take place to repay me for my trouble? It suddenly struck me that it was absurd to expect Marcello to come out to meet me and perform any mad antics he might be meditating there before my eyes for my especial satisfaction. Why I had supposed that something would take place in the grove I do not know, except that this seemed a fit place for it. I would go and watch the house, and if I saw a light anywhere, I might be sure that he was within. Any fool might have thought of that, but a novelist lays the scene

of his drama and expects his characters to slide about in the grooves like puppets. It is only when mine surprise me that I feel they are alive. When I reached the end of the ilex alley, I saw the house before me. There were more cabbages and onions after I had left the trees, and I saw that in this open space I could easily be perceived by any one standing on the balcony above. As I drew back again under the ilexes, a window above, not the one on the balcony, was suddenly lighted up; but the light did not remain long, and presently a gleam shone through the glass oval over the door below.

I had just time to spring behind the thickest trunk near me, when the door opened. I took advantage of its creaking to creep up the slanting tree like a cat, and lie out upon a projecting branch.

As I expected, Marcello came out. He was very pale and

moved mechanically, like a sleep-walker. I was shocked to see how hollow his face had become as he held the candle still lighted in his hand, and it cast deep shadows on his sunken cheeks and fixed eyes, which burned wildly and seemed to see nothing. His lips were quite white, and so drawn that I could see his gleaming teeth. Then the candle fell from his hand, and he came slowly and with a curiously regular step on into the darkness of the ilexes, I watching him from above. But I scarcely think he would have noticed me, had I been standing in his path. When he had passed I let myself down and followed him. I had taken off my shoes, and my tread was absolutely noiseless; moreover, I felt sure he would not turn round.

On he went, with the same mechanical step, until he reached the grove. There I knelt behind an old sarcophagus at the entrance, and waited. What would he do? He stood perfectly still,

not looking about him, but as though the clockwork within him had suddenly stopped. I felt that he was becoming psychologically interesting, after all. Suddenly he threw up his arms as men do when they are mortally wounded on the battle-field, and I expected to see him fall at full length. Instead of this he, made a step forward.

I looked in the same direction, and saw a woman, who must have concealed herself there while I was waiting before the house, come from out of the gloom, and as she slowly approached and laid her head upon his shoulder, the outstretched arms clasped themselves closely around her, so that her face was hidden upon his neck.

So this was the whole matter, and I had been sent off on a wild-goose chase to spy out a common love affair! His opera and his seclusion for the sake of work, his tyrannical refusal to see Detaille unless he sent for him—all

this was but a mask to a vulgar intrigue which, for reasons best known to himself, could not be indulged in in the city. I was thoroughly angry! If Marcello passed his time mooning about in that damp hole all night, no wonder that he looked so wretchedly ill and seemed half mad! I knew very well that Marcello was no saint. Why should he be? But I had not taken him for a fool! He had had plenty of romantic episodes, and as he was discreet without being uselessly mysterious, no one had ever unduly pryed into them, nor should we have done so now. I said to myself that that mixture of French and Italian blood was at the bottom of it; French flimsiness and light-headedness and Italian love of cunning! I looked back upon all the details of my mysterious expedition. I suppose at the root of my anger lay a certain dramatic disappointment at not finding him lying murdered, and I despised myself

for all the trouble I had taken to this ridiculous end: just to see him holding a woman in his arms. I could not see her face, and her figure was enveloped from head to foot in something long and dark; but I could make out that she was tall and slender, and that a pair of white hands gleamed from her drapery. As I was looking intently, for all my indignation, the couple moved on, and still clinging to one another descended the steps. So even the solitude of the lonely laurel grove could not satisfy Marcello's insane love of secrecy! I kept still awhile; then I stole to where they had disappeared, and listened; but all was silent, and I cautiously struck a match and peered down. I could see the steps for a short distance below me, and then the darkness seemed to rise and swallow them. It must be a catacomb, as I had imagined, or an old Roman bath, perhaps, which Marcello had made comfortable

enough, no doubt, and as likely as not they were having a nice little cold supper there. My empty stomach told me that I could have forgiven him even then, could I have shared it. I was in truth frightfully hungry as well as angry, and sat down on one of the stone benches to finish my sandwiches.

The thought of waiting to see this love-sick pair return to upper earth never for a moment occurred to me. I had found out the whole thing, and a great humbug it was! Now I wanted to get back to Rome before my temper had cooled, and to tell Magnin on what a fool's errand he had sent me. If he liked to quarrel with me, all the better!

All the way home I composed cutting French speeches, but they suddenly cooled and petrified like a gust of lava from a volcano when I discovered that the gate was closed. I had never thought of getting a pass, and Magnin ought to have

warned me. Another grievance against the fellow! I enjoyed my resentment, and it kept me warm as I patrolled up and down. There are houses, and even small eating-shops outside the gate, but no light was visible, and I did not care to attract attention by pounding at the doors in the middle of the night; so I crept behind a bit of wall. I was getting used to hiding by this time, and made myself as comfortable as I could with my ulster, took another pull at my flask, and waited. At last the gate was opened and I slipped through, trying not to look as though I had been out all night like a bandit. The guard looked at me narrowly, evidently wondering at my lack of luggage. Had I had a knapsack, I might have been taken for some innocently mad English tourist indulging in the mistaken pleasure of trudging in from Frascati or Albano; but a man in an ulster, with his hands in his pockets, sauntering

in at the gate of the city at break of day as though returning from a stroll, naturally puzzled the officials, who looked after me and shrugged their shoulders.

Luckily, I found an early cab in the Piazza of the Lateran, for I was dead-beat, and was soon at my lodgings in the Via della Croce, where my landlady let me in very speedily. Then at last I had the comfort of throwing off my clothes, all damp with the night dew, and turning in. My wrath had cooled to a certain point, and I did not fear to lower its temperature too greatly by yielding to an overwhelming desire for sleep. An hour or two could make no great difference to Magnin—let him fancy me still hanging about the Vigna Marziali! Sleep I must have, no matter what he thought.

I slept long, and was awakened at last by my landlady, Sora Nanna, standing over me, and saying, "There is a Signore who wants you."

"It is I, Magnin!" said a voice behind her. "I could not wait for you to come!" He looked haggard with anxiety and watching.

"Detaille is raving still," he went on, "only worse than before. Speak, for Heaven's sake! Why don't you tell me something?" And he shook me by the arm as though he thought I was still asleep.

"Have you nothing to say? You must have seen something! Did you see Marcello?"

"Oh, yes, I saw him!"

"Well?"

"Well, he was very comfortable—quite alive. He had a woman's arms around him."

I heard my door violently slammed to a ferocious "*Sacré gamin!*" and then steps springing down the stairs. I felt perfectly happy at having made such an impression, and turned and resumed my broken sleep with almost a kindly feeling toward Magnin, who was at

that moment probably tearing up the Spanish Scalinata two steps at a time, and making himself horribly hot. It could not help Detaille, poor fellow! He could not understand my news. When I had slept long enough I got up, refreshed myself with a bath and something to eat, and went off to see Detaille. It was not his fault that I had been made a fool of, so I felt sorry for him.

I found him raving just as I had left him the day before, only worse, as Magnin said. He persisted in continually crying, "Marcello, take care! no one can save you!" in hoarse, weak tones, but with the regularity of a knell, keeping up a peculiar movement with his feet, as though he were weary with a long road, but must press forward to his goal. Then he would stop and break into childish sobs.

"My feet are so sore," he murmured, piteously, "and I am

so tired! But I will come! They are following me, but I am strong!" Then a violent struggle with his invisible pursuers, in which he would break off into that singing of his, alternating with the warning cry. The singing voice was quite another from the speaking one. He went on and on repeating the singular air which he had himself called a Funeral March, and which had become intensely disagreeable to me. If it was one, indeed, it surely was intended for no Christian burial. As he sang, the tears kept trickling down his cheeks, and Magnin sat wiping them away as tenderly as a woman. Between his song he would clasp his hands, feebly enough, for he was very weak when the delirium did not make him violent, and cry, in heart-rending tones, "Marcello, I shall never see you again! Why did you leave us?" At last, when he stopped for a moment, Magnin left his side, beckoning the Sister

to take it, and drew me into the other room, closing the door behind him.

"Now tell me exactly how you saw Marcello," said he; so I related my whole absurd experience — forgetting, however, my personal irritation, for he looked too wretched and worn for anybody to be angry with him. He made me repeat several times my description of Marcello's face and manner as he had come out of the house. That seemed to make more impression upon him than the love-business.

"Sick people have strange intuitions," he said, gravely; "and I persist in thinking that Marcello is very ill and in danger. *Tenez!*" And here he broke off, went to the door, and called "*Ma sœur!*" under his breath. She understood, and after having drawn the bed-clothes straight, and once more dried the trickling tears, she came noiselessly to where we

stood, the wet handkerchief still in her hand. She was a singularly tall and strong-looking woman, with piercing black eyes and a self-controlled manner. Strange to say, she bore the adopted name of Claudius, instead of a more feminine one.

"*Ma sœur*," said Magnin, "at what o'clock was it that he sprang out of bed and we had to hold him for so long?"

"Half-past eleven and a few minutes," she answered, promptly. Then he turned to me.

"At what time did Marcello come out into the garden?"

"Well, it might have been half-past eleven," I answered, unwillingly. "I should say that three quarters of an hour might possibly have passed since I rang my repeater. Mind you, I wont swear it!" I hate to have people try to prove mysterious coincidences, and this was just what they were attempting.

"Are you sure of the hour, *ma sœur?*" I asked, a little tartly.

She looked at me calmly with her great, black eyes, and said :

"I heard the Trinità de' Monti strike the half-hour just before it happened."

"Be so good as to tell Monsieur Sutton exactly what took place," said Magnin.

"One moment, Monsieur" ; and she went swiftly and softly to Detaille, raised him on her strong arm, and held a glass to his lips, from which he drank mechanically. Then she came and stood where she could watch him through the open door.

"He hears nothing," she said, as she hung the handkerchief to dry over a chair ; and then she went on. "It was half-past eleven, and my patient had been very uneasy—that is to say, more so even than before. It might have been four or five minutes after the clock had finished striking that he became suddenly quite still, and then began to tremble all over, so that the bed shook with him." She spoke ad-

mirable English, as many of the Sisters do, so I need not translate, but will give her own words.

"He went on trembling until I thought he was going to have a fit, and told Monsieur Magnin to be ready to go for the doctor, when just then the trembling stopped; he became perfectly stiff, his hair stood up upon his head, and his eyes seemed coming out of their sockets, though he could see nothing, for I passed the candle before them. All at once he sprang out of his bed and rushed to the door. I did not know he was so strong. Before he got there I had him in my arms, for he has become very light, and I carried him back to bed again, though he was struggling, like a child. Monsieur Magnin came in from the next room just as he was trying to get up again, and we held him down until it was past, but he screamed Monsieur Souvestre's name for a long time after that. Afterward he was

very cold and exhausted, of course, and I gave him some beef-tea, though it was not the hour for it."

"I think you had better tell the Sister all about it," said Magnin turning to me. "It is best that the nurse should know everything."

"Very well," said I; "though I do not think it's much in her line." She answered me herself: "Everything which concerns our patients is our business. Nothing shocks us." Thereupon she sat down and thrust her hands into her long sleeves, prepared to listen. I repeated the whole affair as I had done to Magnin. She never took her brilliant eyes from off my face, and listened as coolly as though she had been a doctor hearing an account of a difficult case, though to me it seemed almost sacrilege to be describing the behavior of a love-stricken youth to a Sister of Charity.

"What do you say to that, *ma*

sœur?" asked Magnin, when I had done.

"I say nothing, monsieur. It is sufficient that I know it"; and she withdrew her hands from her sleeves, took up the handkerchief, which was dry by this time, and returned quietly to her place at the bedside.

"I wonder if I have shocked her, after all?" I said to Magnin.

"Oh, no," he answered. "They see many things, and a *sœur* is as abstract as a confessor; they do not allow themselves any personal feelings. I have seen Sœur Claudius listen perfectly unmoved to the most abominable ravings, only crossing herself beneath her cape at the most hideous blasphemies. It was last summer when poor Justin Revol died. You were not here." Magnin put his hand to his forehead.

"You are looking ill yourself," I said. "Go and try to sleep, and I will stay."

"Very well," he answered;

"but I cannot rest unless you promise to remember everything he says, that I may hear it when I wake"; and he threw himself down upon the hard sofa like a sack, and was asleep in a moment; and I, who had felt so angry with him but a few hours ago, put a cushion under his head and made him comfortable.

I sat down in the next room and listened to Detaille's monotonous ravings, while Sœur Claudius read in her book of prayers. It was getting dusk, and several of the academicians stole in and stood over the sick man and shook their heads. They looked around for Magnin, but I pointed to the other room with my finger on my lips, and they nodded and went away on tip-toe.

It required no effort of memory to repeat Detaille's words to Magnin when he woke, for they were always the same. We had another Sister that night, and as Sœur Claudius was not to

return till the next day at mid-day, I offered to share the watch with Magnin who was getting very nervous and exhausted, and who seemed to think that some such attack might be expected as had occurred the night before. The new Sister was a gentle, delicate-looking little woman, with tears in her soft brown eyes as she bent over the sick man, and crossed herself from time to time, grasping the crucifix which hung from the beads at her waist. Nevertheless she was calm and useful, and as punctual as Sœur Claudius herself in giving the medicines.

The doctor had come in the evening, and prescribed a change in these. He would not say what he thought of his patient, but only declared that it was necessary to wait for a crisis. Magnin sent for some supper, and we sat over it together in silence, neither of us hungry. He kept looking at his watch.

"If the same thing happens

to-night, he will die!" said he, and laid his head on his arms.

"He will die in a most foolish cause, then," I said, angrily, for I thought he was going to cry, as those Frenchmen have a way of doing, and I wanted to irritate him by way of a tonic; so I went on:

"It would be dying for a *vaurien* who is making an ass of himself in a ridiculous business, which will be over in a week! Souvestre may get as much fever as he likes! only don't ask me to come and nurse him."

"It is not the fever," said he, slowly, "it is a horrible nameless dread that I have; I suppose it is listening to Detaille that makes me nervous. Hark!" he added, "it strikes eleven. We must watch!"

"If you really expect another attack, you had better warn the Sister," I said; so he told her in a few words what might happen.

"Very well, monsieur," she answered, and sat down quietly

near the bed, Magnin at the pillow and I near him. No sound was to be heard but Detaille's ceaseless lament.

And now, before I tell you more, I must stop to entreat you to believe me. It will be almost impossible for you to do so, I know, for I have laughed myself at such tales, and no assurances would have made me credit them. But I, Robert Sutton, swear that this thing happened. More I cannot do. It is the truth.

We had been watching Detaille intently. He was lying with closed eyes, and had been very restless. Suddenly be became quite still, and then began to tremble, exactly as Sœur Claudius had described. It was a curious, uniform trembling, apparently in every fiber, and his iron bedstead shook as though strong hands were at its head and foot. Then came the absolute rigidity she had also described, and I do not exagger-

ate when I say that not only did his short-cropped hair seem to stand erect, but that it literally did so. A lamp cast the shadow of his profile against the wall to the left of his bed, and as I looked at the immovable outline, which seemed painted on the wall, I saw the hair slowly rise until the line where it joined the forehead was quite a different one—abrupt, instead of a smooth sweep. His eyes opened wide and were frightfully fixed, then as frightfully strained, but they certainly did not see us.

We waited breathlessly for what might follow. The little Sister was standing close to him, her lips pressed together and a little pale, but very calm. "Do not be frightened, *ma sœur*," whispered Magnin; and she answered in a business-like tone, "No, monsieur," and drew still nearer to her patient, and took his hands, which were stiff as those of a corpse, between her own to warm them.

I laid mine upon his heart; it was beating so imperceptibly that I almost thought it had stopped, and as I leaned my face to his lips I could feel no breath issue from them. It seemed as though the rigor would last forever.

Suddenly, without any transition, he hurled himself with enormous force, and literally at one bound, almost into the middle of the room, scattering us aside like leaves in the wind. I was upon him in a moment, grappling with him with all my strength to prevent him from reaching the door. Magnin had been thrown backward against the table, and I heard the medicine bottles crash with his fall. He had flung back his hand to save himself, and rushed to help me, with the blood dropping from a cut in his wrist. The little Sister sprang to us. Detaille had thrown her violently back upon her knees, and now, with a nurse's instinct, she tried to throw a

shawl over his bare breast. We four must have made a strange group!

Four? *We were five!* Marcello Souvestre stood before us, just within the door! We all saw him, for he was there. His bloodless face was turned toward us unmoved; his hands hung by his side as white as his face; only his eyes had life in them; they were fixed on Detaille.

"Thank God, you have come at last!" I cried. "Don't stand there like a fool! Help us, can't you?" But he never moved. I was furiously angry, and, leaving my hold, sprang upon him to drag him forward. My outstretched hands struck hard against the door, and I felt a thing like a spider's web envelop me. It seemed to draw itself over my mouth and eyes, and to blind and choke me, and then to flutter and tear and float from me.

Marcello was gone!

Detaille had slipped from Magnin's hold and lay in a heap upon the floor, as though his limbs were broken. The Sister was trembling violently as she knelt over him and tried to raise his head. We gazed at one another, stooped and lifted him in our arms, and carried him back to his bed, while Sœur Marie quietly collected the broken phials.

"You saw it, *ma sœur?*" I heard Magnin whisper, hoarsely.

"Yes, monsieur!" she only answered, in a trembling voice, holding on to her crucifix. Then she said in a professional tone:

"Will monsieur let me bind up his wrist?" And though her fingers trembled and his hand was shaking, the bandage was an irreproachable one.

Magnin went into the next room, and I heard him throw himself heavily into a chair. Detaille seemed to be sleeping. His breath came regularly; his eyes were closed with a look of

peace about the lids, his hands lying in a natural way upon the quilt. He had not moved since we laid him there. I went softly to where Magnin was sitting in the dark. He did not move, but only said: "Marcello is dead!"

"He is either dead or dying," I answered, "and we must go to him."

"Yes," Magnin whispered, "we must go to him, but we shall not reach him."

"We will go as soon as it is light," I said, and then we were still again.

When the morning came at last, he went and found a comrade to take his place, and only said to Sœur Marie, "It is not necessary to speak of this night," and at her quiet, "You are right, monsieur," we felt that we could trust her. Detaille was still sleeping. Was this the crisis the doctor had expected? Perhaps; but surely not in such fearful form. I insisted upon my com-

panion having some breakfast before we started, and I breakfasted myself, but I cannot say I tasted what passed between my lips.

We engaged a closed carriage, for we did not know what we might bring home with us, though neither of us spoke out his thoughts. It was early morning still when we reached the Vigna Marziali, and we had not exchanged a word all the way. I rang at the bell, while the coachman looked on curiously. It was answered promptly by the *guardiano* of whom Detaille has already told you.

"Where is the Signore?" I asked through the gate.

"*Chi lo sa?*" he answered. "He is here, of course; he has not left the Vigna. Shall I call him?"

"*Call him?*" I knew that no mortal voice could reach Marcello now, but I tried to fancy he was still alive.

"No," I said. "Let us in.

We want to surprise him; he will be pleased."

The man hesitated but he finally opened the gate, and we entered, leaving the carriage to wait outside. We went straight to the house; the door at the back was wide open. There had been a gale in the night, and it had torn some leaves and bits of twigs from the trees and blown them into the entrance hall. They lay scattered across the threshold, and were evidence that the door had remained open ever since they had fallen. The *guardiano* left us, probably to escape Marcello's anger at having let us in, and we went up the stairs unhindered, Magnin foremost, for he knew the house better than I, from Detaille's description. He had told him about the corner room with the balcony, and we pretended that Marcello might be there, absorbed betimes in his work, but we did not call him.

He was not there. His papers

were strewn over the table as though he had been writing, but the inkstand was dry and full of dust—he could not have used it for days. We went silently into the other chambers. Perhaps he was still asleep. But, no! We found his bed untouched, so he could not have lain in it that night. The rooms were all unlocked but one, and this closed door made our hearts beat. Marcello could scarcely be there, however, for there was no key in the lock; I saw the daylight shining through the key-hole. We called his name, but there came no answer. We knocked loudly; still no sign from within; so I put my shoulder to the door, which was old and cracked in several places, and succeeded in bursting it open.

Nothing was there but a sculptor's modeling-stand, with something upon it covered with a white cloth, and the modeling-tools on the floor. At the sight

of the cloth, still damp, we drew a deep breath. It could not have hung there for many hours, certainly not for twenty-four. We did not raise it. "He would be vexed," said Magnin, and I nodded, for it is accounted almost a crime in the artist's world to unveil a sculptor's work behind his back. We expressed no surprise at the fact of his modeling; a ban seemed to lie upon our tongues. The cloth hung tightly to the object beneath it, and showed us the outline of a woman's head and rounded bust, and so veiled we left her. There was a little winding stair leading out of the passage, and we climbed it, to find ourselves in a sort of belvedere, commanding a superb view. It was a small, open terrace, on the roof of the house, and we saw at a glance that no one was there.

We had now been all over the casino, which was small and simply built, being evidently intended only for short summer

use. As we stood leaning over the balustrade, we could look down into the garden. No one was there but the *guardiano*, lying among his cabbages with his arms behind his head, half asleep. The laurel grove had been in my mind from the beginning, only it had seemed more natural to go to the house first. Now we descended the stairs silently and directed our steps thither.

As we approached it, the *guardiano* came toward us, lazily.

"Have you seen the Signore?" he asked, and his stupidly placid face showed me that he, at least, had no hand in his disappearance.

"No, not yet," I answered, "but we shall come across him somewhere, no doubt. Perhaps he has gone to take a walk, and we will wait for him. What is this?" I went on, trying to seem careless. We were standing now by the little arch of which you know.

"This?" said he; "I have never been down there, but they say it is something old. Do the Signori want to see it? I will fetch a lantern."

I nodded, and he went off to his cabin. I had a couple of candles in my pocket, for I had intended to explore the place, should we not find Marcello. It was there that he had disappeared that night, and my thoughts had been busy with it; but I kept my candles concealed, reflecting that they would give our search an air of premeditation which would excite curiosity.

"When did you see the Signore last?" I asked, when he had returned with the lantern.

"I brought him his supper yesterday evening."

"At what o'clock?"

"It was the Ave Maria, Signore," he replied. "He always sups then."

It would be useless to put any further questions. He was evi-

dently utterly unobserving, and would lie to please us.

"Let me go first," said Magnin, taking the lantern. We set our feet upon the steps; a cold air seemed to fill our lungs and yet to choke us, and a thick darkness lay beneath. The steps, as I could see by the light of my candle, were modern, as well as the vaulting above them. A tablet was let into the wall, and in spite of my excitement I paused to read it, perhaps because I was glad to delay whatever awaited us below. It ran thus:

"Questo antico sepolcro Romano scoprì il Conte Marziali nell' anno 1853, e piamente conservò." In plain English:

"Count Marziali discovered this ancient Roman sepulcher in the year 1853, and piously preserved it."

I read it more quickly than it has taken time to write here, and hurried after Magnin, whose footsteps sounded faintly below me.

As I hastened, a draught of cold air extinguished my candle, and I was trying to make my way down by feeling along the wall, which was horribly dark and clammy, when my heart stood still at a cry from far beneath me —a cry of horror!

"Where are you?" I shouted; but Magnin was calling my name, and could not hear me. "I am here. I am in the dark!"

I was making haste as fast as I could, but there were several turnings.

"I have found him!" came up from below.

"Alive?" I shouted. No answer.

One last short flight brought me face to face with the gleam of the lantern. It came from a low doorway, and within stood Magnin, peering into the darkness. I knew by his face, as he held the light high above him, that our fears were realized.

Yes; Marcello was there. He was lying stretched upon the

floor, staring at the ceiling, dead, and already stiff, as I could see at a glance. We stood over him, saying not a word; then I knelt down and felt him, for mere form's sake, and said, as though I had not known it before, "He has been dead for some hours."

"Since yesterday evening," said Magnin, in a horror-stricken voice, yet with a certain satisfaction in it, as though to say, "You see, I was right."

Marcello was lying with his head slightly thrown back, no contortions in his handsome features; rather the look of a person who has quietly died of exhaustion—who has slipped unconsciously from life to death. His collar was thrown open and a part of his breast, of a ghastly white, was visible. Just over the heart was a small spot.

"Give me the lantern," I whispered, as I stooped over it. It was a very little spot, of a faint purplish-brown, and must have changed color within the night.

I examined it intently, and should say that the blood had been sucked to the surface, and then a small prick or incision made. The slight sub-cutaneous effusion led me to this conclusion. One tiny drop of coagulated blood closed the almost imperceptible wound. I probed it with the end of one of Magnin's matches. It was scarcely more than skin deep, so it could not be the stab of a stiletto, however slender, or the track of a bullet. Still, it was strange, and with one impulse we turned to see if no one were concealed there, or if there were no second exit. It would be madness to suppose that the murderer, if there was one, would remain by his victim. Had Marcello been making love to a pretty contadina, and was this some jealous lover's vengeance? But it was not a stab. Had one drop of poison in the little wound done this deadly work?

We peered about the place,

and I saw that Magnin's eyes were blinded by tears and his face as pale as that upturned one on the floor, whose lids I had vainly tried to close. The chamber was low, and beautifully ornamented with stucco bas-reliefs, in the manner of the well-known one not far from there upon the same road. Winged genii, griffins, and arabesques, modeled with marvelous lightness, covered the walls and ceiling. There was no other door than the one we had entered by. In the center stood a marble sarcophagus, with the usual subjects sculptured upon it; on the one side Hercules conducting a veiled figure, on the other a dance of nymphs and fauns. A space in the middle contained the following inscription, deeply cut in the stone, and still partially filled with red pigment:

D. M.
VESPERTILIAE · THC · AIMA-
TOΠΩTIΔOC · Q · FLAVIVS ·
VIX·IPSE·SOSPES·MON·
POSVIT

"What is this?" whispered Magnin. It was only a pickax and a long crowbar, such as the country people use in hewing out their blocks of "tufa," and his foot had struck against them. Who could have brought them here? They must belong to the *guardiano* above, but he said that he had never come here, and I believed him, knowing the Italian horror of darkness and lonely places; but what had Marcello wanted with them? It did not occur to us that archæological curiosity could have led him to attempt to open the sarcophagus, the lid of which had evidently never been raised, thus justifying the expression, "piously preserved."

As I rose from examining the tools, my eyes fell upon the line of mortar where the cover joined to the stone below, and I noticed that some of it had been removed, perhaps with the pickax which lay at my feet. I tried it with my nails and found that it was

very crumbly. Without a word, I took the tool in my hand, Magnin instinctively following my movements with the lantern. What impelled us, I do not know. I had myself no thought, only an irresistible desire to see what was within. I saw that much of the mortar had been broken away, and lay in small fragments upon the ground, which I had not noticed before. It did not take long to complete the work. I snatched the lantern from Magnin's hand and set it upon the ground, where it shone full upon Marcello's dead face, and by its light I found a little break between the two masses of stone and managed to insert the end of my crowbar, driving it in with a blow of the pickax. The stone chipped and then cracked a little. Magnin was shivering.

"What are you going to do?" he said, looking around at where Marcello lay.

"Help me!" I cried, and we two bore with all our might upon

the crowbar. I am a strong man, and I felt a sort of blind fury as the stone refused to yield. What if the bar should snap? With another blow I drove it in still further, then using it as a lever, we weighed upon it with our outstretched arms until every muscle was at its highest tension. The stone moved a little, and, almost fainting, we stopped to rest.

From the ceiling hung the rusty remnant of an iron chain, which must once have held a lamp. To this, by scrambling upon the sarcophagus, I contrived to make fast the lantern.

"Now!" said I, and we heaved again at the lid. It rose, and we alternately heaved and pushed until it lost its balance and fell with a thundering crash upon the other side; such a crash that the walls seemed to shake, and I was for a moment utterly deafened, while little pieces of stucco rained upon us from the ceiling. When we had paused

to recover from the shock, we leaned over the sarcophagus and looked in.

The light shone full upon it, and we saw—how is it possible to tell? We saw lying there, amid folds of moldering rags, the body of a woman, perfect as in life, with faintly rosy face, soft crimson lips, and a breast of living pearl, which seemed to heave as though stirred by some delicious dream. The rotten stuff swathed about her was in ghastly contrast to this lovely form, fresh as the morning! Her hands lay stretched at her side, the pink palms were turned a little outward, her eyes were closed as peacefully as those of a sleeping child, and her long hair, which shone red-golden in the dim light from above, was wound around her head in numberless finely-plaited tresses, beneath which little locks escaped in rings upon her brow. I could have sworn that the blue veins on that divinely perfect bosom held living blood!

We were absolutely paralyzed, and Magnin leaned gasping over the edge as pale as death, paler by far than this living, almost smiling face to which his eyes were glued. I do not doubt that I was as pale as he at this inexplicable vision. As I looked, the red lips seemed to grow redder. They *were* redder! The little pearly teeth showed between them. I had not seen them before, and now a clear ruby drop trickled down to her rounded chin, and from there slipped sideways and fell upon her neck. Horror-struck I gazed upon the living corpse, till my eyes could not bear the sight any longer. As I looked away, my glance fell once more upon the mysterious inscription, half Latin, half Greek, and the awful meaning of the words flashed upon me suddenly as I read them this second time. "To Vespertilia"—that was in Latin, and even the Latin name of the woman suggested a thing of evil

flitting in the dusk. But the full horror of the nature of that thing had been veiled to Roman eyes under the Greek *τῆς αἱματοπωτίδος*, "The blood-drinker, the vampire woman." And Flavius —her lover—*vix ipse sospes*, "himself hardly saved" from that deadly embrace, had buried her here, and set a seal upon her sepulcher, trusting to the weight of stone and the strength of clinging mortar, to imprison forever the beautiful monster he had loved.

"Infamous murderess!" I cried, "you have killed Marcello!" and a sudden vengeful calm came over me.

"Give me the pickax," I said to Magnin. I can hear myself saying it still. He picked it up and handed it to me as in a dream; he seemed little better than an idiot, and the beads of sweat were shining on his forehead. I took my knife, and from the long wooden handle of the pickax I cut a fine, sharp stake.

Then I clambered, scarcely feeling any repugnance, over the side of the sarcophagus, my feet among the folds of Vespertilia's decaying winding-sheet, which crushed like ashes beneath my boot.

I looked for one moment at that white breast, but only to choose the loveliest spot, where the network of azure veins shimmered like veiled turquoises, and then with one blow I drove the pointed stake deep down through the breathing snow and stamped it in with my heel.

An awful shriek, so ringing and horrible, that I thought my ears must have burst; but even then I felt neither fear nor horror. There are times when these cannot touch us. I stooped and gazed once again at the face, now undergoing a fearful change —fearful and final!

"Foul vampire!" I said, quietly, in my concentrated rage. "You will do no more harm now!" And then, without looking back

upon her cursed face, I clambered out of the horrible tomb.

We raised Marcello, and slowly carried him up the steep stairs—a difficult task, for the way was narrow and he was so stiff. I noticed that the steps were ancient up to the end of the second flight; above, the modern passage was somewhat broader. When we reached the top, the *guardiano* was lying upon one of the stone benches; he did not mean us to cheat him out of his fee. I gave him a couple of francs.

"You see that we have found the Signore," I tried to say in a natural voice. "He is very weak, and we will carry him to the carriage." I had thrown my handkerchief over Marcello's face, but the man knew as well as I that he was dead. Those stiff feet told their own story, but Italians are timid of being involved in such affairs. They have a childish dread of the police, and he only answered, "Poor Signorino! He is very

ill; it is better to take him to Rome," and kept cautiously clear of us as we went up to the ilex alley with our icy burden, and he did not go to the gate with us, not liking to be observed by the coachman, who was dozing on his box. With difficulty we got Marcello's corpse into the carriage, the driver turning to look at us suspiciously. I explained we had found our friend very ill, and at the same time slipped a gold piece into his hand, telling him to drive to the Via del Governo Vecchio. He pocketed the money, and whipped his horses into a trot, while we sat supporting the stiff body, which swayed like a broken doll at every pebble in the road. When we reached the Via del Governo Vecchio at last, no one saw us carry him into the house. There was no step before the door, and we drew up so close to it that it was possible to screen our burden from sight. When we had brought him into his room

and laid him upon his bed, we noticed that his eyes were closed; from the movement of the carriage, perhaps, though that was scarcely possible. The landlady behaved very much as I had expected her to do, for, as I told you, I know the Italians. She pretended, too, that the Signore was very ill, and made a pretense of offering to fetch a doctor, and, when I thought it best to tell her that he was dead, declared that it must have happened that very moment, for she had seen him look at us and close his eyes again. She had always told him that he ate too little and that he would be ill. Yes, it was weakness and that bad air out there which had killed him; and then he worked too hard. When she had successfully established this fiction, which we were glad enough to agree to, for neither did we wish for the publicity of an inquest, she ran out and fetched a gossip to come and keep her company.

So died Marcello Souvestre and so died Vespertilia, the blood-drinker, at last.

There is not much more to tell. Marcello lay calm and beautiful upon his bed, and the students came and stood silently looking at him, then knelt down for a moment to say a prayer, crossed themselves, and left him forever.

We hastened to the Villa Medici, where Detaille was sleeping, and Sister Claudius watching him with a satisfied look on her strong face. She rose noiselessly at our entrance, and came to us at the threshold.

"He will recover," said she, softly. She was right. When he awoke and opened his eyes he knew us directly, and Magnin breathed a devout "Thank God!"

"Have I been ill, Magnin?" he asked, very feebly.

"You have had a little fever," answered Magnin, promptly;

"but it is over now. Here is Monsieur Sutton come to see you."

"Has Marcello been here?" was the next question. Magnin looked at him very steadily.

"No," he only said, letting his face tell the rest.

"Is he dead, then?" Magnin only bowed his head. "Poor friend!" Detaille murmured to himself, then closed his heavy eyes and slept again.

A few days after Marcello's funeral we went to the fatal Vigna Marziali to bring back the objects which had belonged to him. As I laid the manuscript score of the opera carefully together, my eye fell upon a passage which struck me as the identical one which Detaille had so constantly sung in his delirium, and which I had noted down. Strange to say, when I reminded him of it later, it was perfectly new to him, and he declared that Marcello had not let him examine his manuscript. As for the veiled

bust in the other room, we left it undisturbed, and to crumble away unseen.

A SHADOW ON A WAVE.

A SHADOW ON A WAVE.

AN ARTIST'S STORY OF MODERN VENICE.

I.

THERE are some recollections so exquisitely, almost divinely painful, that they are dearer to me than happiness itself. We have paid for them and they are ours. I was sketching in Venice, waiting for my wife, who was in Paris, to join me, and humbly trying to fix upon my canvas some of the faint opal and red tints of the wonderful city, and to get one, at least, of her many moods to shine upon me. I worked hard, though

there was little to show for it, as my wife told me when she turned over my many sketches. "What, three slimy poles and a bit of green water!" she exclaimed; "was that all you did in a day? Why didn't you paint a whole view?" I do not like her to criticize my studies. She handles them unlovingly, looks at them upside down, and says, "If you would only enlarge that and make a picture of it, and put in some figures, I might have the pink dress after all." Three palaces, several gondolas, and a flock of pigeons mean the pink dress, and six palaces, more gondolas, and more pigeons mean Paris and Judic. We had been married several years, and she had never interfered with my work, but neither had she ever helped it. How could an artist help wanting such a pretty creature for his own, fancying that her mere presence must prove an inspiration to great works, and that his laurels could not fail to

thrive at the touch of her charming hand?

I could not guess that she did not care for laurels, and would give them all for an artificial rose from a milliner's window. What if it were scentless and made of pink calico! It set off her prettiness better than the immortal wreath!

Well, I am saying too much or too little, so I will stop. She has done her best, so have I, and if two bests cannot mingle in a perfect whole, it is that they have no affinity for each other. We have never had a harsh word, never sulked, and never grumbled to sympathizing friends, but got on amicably and decently; I producing pictures which resulted in pink, green, or blue dresses, as the fashion might be, and she—— Yes, I honestly think that she has never been unhappy with me. Wild, thankful, choking happiness does not lie in her nature, and she does not miss it. At the time I am

writing of, several pictures had brought a satisfactory number of dresses—all too important not to be seen to personally—and, as she had been invited by her married sister to stay with her in Paris, with a perspective of Trouville and Judic, it seemed to her a proof of an all-wise Providence which should not be passed over.

So we parted in Paris; she rather absent in her expressions of decent regret, for she had an appointment about a bonnet, and I neither glad nor sorry; but thinking whether I would not have done better to take more sketching blocks along with me, and whether canvasses were properly packed.

When I got to the station I found that there was half an hour still before me, for, as I have said, my wife was in a hurry to say good-by, and I drove to the colorman's and laid in more blocks; for no sooner had I breathed the railway atmosphere and smelled that indescribable

mixture of smoke, oil, and porters, which is so suggestive of travel and liberty, that I felt Venice upon me, and knew that I should work there.

As I was driving back, with my arms full of "Whatman's," a carriage passed me, and in it, with her sister, sat my wife. She did not see me, being busily engaged in describing some object, and by the way her well-gloved hands fluttered around her graceful head, I concluded that it must be the bonnet.

My sensation was a strange one. It seemed to me as though years had gone by since I had seen her last, though some of the perfume from her neat little parting embrace was still clinging to my coat. I hate perfumes, but she likes them. Venice lay between us, and I felt no emotion at the recognition, but instead the dome of the "Salute" swelled like a pearly bubble against the azure sky, and the slow waves were lapping around

my gondola. My soul was already there, though my body was being jolted in a cab through the Rue de la Paix.

Of the journey there is little to be said. I had a companion all the way, evidently a fellow-countryman, and after our national fashion we avoided exchanging a word or even a mute civility.

He interested me in so far that I noticed a color-box and sketching-stool among his traps, and that he seemed to eye mine. When we reached Verona, our national ice began to thaw, and he said:

"May I ask if you are an artist?"

I pointed to my luggage.

"May I put the same question?"

"Well, not exactly an artist," he answered, "but I am trying to become one." The modest answer pleased me. I had already taken rather a fancy to his face, for there was a look in his

eyes as though they saw to good purpose, so we fell into talk, and finally, as Venice lay before us, a faint rosy vision floating upon a fiery sea, we exchanged cards, and he was good enough to say that my name was not unknown to him. "San Giorgio at Early Morning," in the last year's Academy, had made him acquainted with it.

At Venice we parted, to meet occasionally sitting in our gondolas before old palaces or floating slowly down lonely canals, where scarlet pomegranate blossoms, hanging over a sun-bathed wall, were too good to be passed unheeded, their glorious bloom burning and quivering against the midday sky.

We met sometimes, too, at the "Ristorante di San Moisè," where I often dined or supped, liking to feel thoroughly among Italians. I had no wish to fall a prey to parties of mechanically industrious fools of my own nation, who would quote the

"Stones of Venice," and ruthlessly spoil a day of work by forcing me to take them to yawn at pictures which any guide could have shown them. No, I preferred the guests of San Moisè, who did not even know my name, and from whose intrusion I was as safe as though I had been invisible. They amused me, too, and I got to know them and their favorite dishes by heart. Italians are the best of natural actors; spontaneous, and yet wonderfully finished in their style. They all appeared to be upon brotherly terms with Domenico, the bland waiter, who would skip away and bring each his particular preference with the air of saying, "See how I have thought of you!"

There was one very shabby old gentleman who, for some mysterious reason, always got the finest fish, and seemed to pay less for it than anybody else. This did not prevent him from scolding over his salad; but I

came to know that he would smile again at the "Risotto," and he and Domenico always parted the best of friends, though he never left a propitiatory soldo behind upon the plate when he paid his problematically small reckoning.

One languid youth used to arrive punctually every day at the same hour and sink down at his place on an ottoman near the door, saying, in an exhaustive tone, "Bring me something—anything you like," as though the best were too bad for choice.

For a long time I took him for some pampered creature bereft momentarily of a cook, until I saw him one day showing some purchasers about Salviati's rooms, when I understood that his punctuality was no matter of choice, nor his dinner neither, and that he was probably a humble subscriber at fifty centimes the meal, though a prince could not have consumed it more disdainfully.

I do not know why I have dwelt

upon these childish details, unless it be because all that time is dear to me, and that these figures belong to the picture—a picture so vivid to me that life seems a dream beside it. I used to go to and fro in my gondola, though you may walk from one end of Venice to the other. My gondoliere always took the same way through the maze of melancholy little canals. I remarked that a certain window in an old palace was always lighted, and that behind a thin curtain moved mechanically the shadow of a hand and arm, up and down—up and down, with occasionally a profile, indistinct but graceful, bending forward as if to examine the stitches. A lighted window with a woman's shadow behind it in a lonely canal in Venice is a romance in itself, and from only noticing that every evening the hand was busily at work, I came to watching for it from the turn at the corner, where the gondoliere sang out his long-

drawn, "O premì!" or "O stallì!" in warning, melancholy notes.

"What canal is this?" I had once asked him in my pedantic Italian, and he had answered in his soft Venetian, "Xè lo Canaleto Barbarigo." By day, when I passed that way, the curtain remained drawn.

Was the worker behind it? I could not tell. Sometimes, as I went to my midday meal, I saw an old man, in a faded dressing-gown, leaning listlessly out of another window, his thin old eyelids blinking in the sunshine and his long hands despondently rubbing his threadbare elbows. He used to look up and down the canal, then fix his pale, feeble eyes on the green water below, indifferent to who came or went.

One day the moldy-looking green curtain behind him was parted, and a lovely hand was laid gently and questioningly upon his arm. He did not

move, and presently a beautiful girl appeared beside him. She might have stepped out of a picture by Palma Vecchio ; white and amber-tinted, with true auburn gold hair crisped at the temples and making a glory about her head as the sun caught the golden tendrils. She drew nearer to him still, and, laying her rounded cheek against his withered one, stood silently looking down into the water from which he had never raised his eyes. Suddenly they met mine as I was gazing upward. He turned sharply, and, pushing or drawing the girl back, disappeared, and the curtain fell together again. From within it must have been transparent enough, but from without one could only see its worn and faded pattern as it moved in the hot midday air. I have said that the little canal was a lonely one, though it led to noisy, crowded San Moisè. I had chosen an out-of-the-way place to live in,

and the way there lay through half Venice, alternatively populous and deserted.

My lodgings consisted of two rooms in a tumble-down palace, with a dilapidated stone balcony, which had taken my fancy. It had a moss-grown entrance, and the green seaweed came up at high tide and hung upon its broken steps, while crabs and other crawling creatures went in and out of the deep sea-worn holes.

Within dwelt innumerable poor families, who crawled about much after the fashion of the inmates on the door-steps. With true Italian tact they showed no surprise at my presence among them. I was the Signore Inglese—that was all. But, as I passed up and down the stairs, cooking would be going on within the open doors, or they would be sitting "to enjoy the air," such as it was, upon their dim landings, eating some nameless mess, which they never failed

to offer me with a smile and a gracious word of courtesy.

"It is poor people's stuff, Signore, but favor us!" It was miserable food, indeed, but the smile and the grace befitted princes. The true Italian, untaught and uncivilized, is a native gentleman. If he has but a crust in his hand, he will so courteously invite you to share it that it turns to truffles and *foie gras*. Though one does not feel moved to taste the morsel, one is compelled to refuse it with ingenious politeness, "I have just dined" being the usual formula. "I regret it!" is invariably the response from, for all we know, the descendant of emperors, and with a well-bred "Pardon me!" he falls hungrily to again. Perhaps my Italian-looking face made them feel more at home with me, for an Italian ancestress exists as no mere tradition in my family. The story goes that a great-grandfather of mine,

while making "the grand tour," fashionable in his day, carried her off from a convent in Padua on the very eve of her taking the veil. How he had got sight or speech of her we never knew, or how the flight was managed. No pursuit seems to have been made by the family; perhaps they preferred to conceal the scandal; and she lived unmolested to become a very old lady in the dear, quiet Yorkshire home now sold long ago.

She brought with her a pair of dark eyes, a string of pearls, and a temper.

The pearls were sold when the house had to go, but the eyes and the temper seem inalienable.

Alas! We have no children to inherit them! As I have said, I worked very hard in those Venetian days, making many sketches, some of which pleased me, while others profoundly discouraged me.

One blazing noonday, as I

passed the old Palazzo in the "Canaleto Barbarigo," the lights and shadows disposed themselves so grandly over its weather-beaten surface—here tawny gold, and there transparent umber—bringing out so finely the peculiar crumbly grain of the stone, that I stopped my gondola and sat considering whether it would not make a sketch worth having.

As I leaned back, looking up to where its cornice stood in contrast to the sky above it, almost white for very heat, a window opened — the window rather—and my beautiful Venetian leaned out, looking anxiously up and down the canal as though expecting somebody. As she looked, her eyes fell full upon mine, and for a moment they rested upon my up-turned face with quiet curiosity. I had left my color-box behind me that day, and must have seemed to her a mere idle gazer at the old house, which probably she could

not realize was worth a glance. As for me, I sat fixed and stupefied by her wonderful beauty, the sun illuminating and glorifying it.

I forgot that it must appear rude beyond words to sit staring at her, nor did she remind me of it by withdrawing.

By the searching light she looked more delicate and fragile than I had thought her to be, suggesting a gorgeous flower grown in the shade. I fancied there was a look of care about the exquisite lips, self-control in the rounded, upturned chin, and that the deep amber eyes told of watching. Her ripply hair parted in waves over her straight white forehead, and lay low upon her neck in a careless, silky coil, held together by a forked pin such as all Venetian women wear. As she turned her head, I saw her profile sharply defined by the background of the curtain behind her. Her face became animated; the object

of her waiting must be in sight. I followed her glance, but saw only a flat boat laden with silvery fish shining and glinting in the sun. She stooped to take something from behind the curtain, and I saw that it was a little basket which she began to lower by a string. Was she tending a love-letter? If so, where was the lover? Surely not the rugged old fisherman, who pushed on until the basket swung almost in front of him. Then he stopped with a backward stroke of his oar, as at a preconcerted signal, drew the basket toward him as he steadied himself in the boat, and put in his brown hand. My heart beat high with expectation. I was looking on a romance, and this old man was the messenger charged to carry the letter to an impatient adorer. This was what I fancied, but what happened was very simple and prosaic. He drew out his hand again, opened wide the grimy palm, and displayed a few coppers.

He counted them over slowly, looked up at the window, shrugging his shoulders with outstretched arms, then tossed the coins discontentedly among his wares, and proceeded to weigh out, scales in hand, and with critical nicety, a little heap of fish. One more he threw into the basket, as a charitable afterthought, then he sent it upward with a contemptuous jerk.

I watched it spinning through the air as the girl above reeled in the string, her white arms, but half concealed by her scanty sleeves, gleaming like pearl in the sunlight. As I looked I caught her serious gaze once more. No blush or embarrassment at being seen buying such a poor meal appeared upon her perfect face. Italians know no false shame, though pride is sometimes mistaken for it.

But I blushed like a conventional Englishman, feeling guilty at having witnessed the pitiful little purchase, and with a

shamefaced air I bade my gondoliere move on, stealing a last glance at the lovely girl. She was looking after me thoughtfully, as if to say, "What can he be blushing about?" Yes, I would certainly make a sketch of the place. Perhaps, too, I should see her sometimes, and might steal that peerless face on to my canvas, and so make it mine forever! The thought thrilled me with a possessive joy. The next morning saw me established in my gondola, which was moored to a ring in a garden wall opposite, my easel before me, and setting my palette in an exultant mood. I had told my gondoliere that, if he could get away, he might be gone for a couple of hours to a neighboring wine-shop, with some soldi to spend in Valpolicella. So he had stepped on to a wood barge which was going slowly by. A glance and a jerk of the head had asked, "Where are you bound for?" A responsive jerk

of head and thumb had answered satisfactorily, and he strode over on to the sluggishly moving boat and sat down at the bow in a talkative attitude, knees up and chin down, on his elbows, evidently prepared to enjoy himself in dealing and receiving gossip. I was left alone with the old Palazzo, the sun, and the pigeons, who restlessly circled above my head, not knowing what to make of this stranger. At last they seemed to say to themselves, in true Venetian fashion, "He is a foreigner, therefore a little mad. We will let him alone!" and settled down upon a roof not far off, coquettishly pluming and preening their glistening feathers. I began to put in my sketch, and suddenly felt as I have done in painting some portraits: I could not see behind the features. The sun-gilt walls looked dead and blind to me. Could I but see through them!

It was the old story: nose, eyes, and oval all right, but no

soul; and I became impatient of the beautiful senseless mask. At last the soul looked out. Just as I was, brush in hand, measuring the height of the windows, one was thrown open, and the lovely inmate stood revealed, as though the doors of a shrine should part and show the saint within. This time she gazed neither to right nor left, but straight at me—long and intensely. Then the window closed again. It was but a short glimpse after all, but the life was there for me, warm, breathing, shining forth from behind the walls. I painted on, hoping that she would reappear, but she did not. I tried to fancy that the curtain slightly parted, but it was only the breeze through the half-shut casement. It was vain and foolish to try to persuade myself that my proceeding could interest her; and yet I was disappointed.

In due time my gondoliere

returned upon another friendly barge, and was vociferous in praises of my work.

"So very like," said he; "especially the windows."

Strange to say, I was glad when he came and I could leave the place. It seemed to me as though all around belonged to the woman within, and that I was stealing it from her.

I said to myself, "I will not come again"; but the next morning, when I looked at my work, it seemed a pity to leave it so. An hour or two more would complete it, and make it smile with light and air. I thought how that smile from Venice would cheer many a murky London day, and, at rest with my scruples, born perhaps only of mortified vanity, I was the next day again sitting before the Palazzo. It was smiling broadly in the sunshine, welcoming the admirer of its mellow old age.

I seemed to understand it better to-day, and my eyes

sought out lovingly the little details I had neglected before, while my brush caressed the canvas with touches from the heart, such as we bestow upon the picture of a friend. This time no beautiful vision showed itself at the window, but I made good progress with my work. One day more and it should be put aside. Perhaps she would miss me then and wonder why I did not come. I was weakly craving to interest this lonely woman. Was Venice casting a glamor over me, relaxing my nerves and will, unmanning me to a fanciful, self-condoling, sickly fool, hungry for the human sympathy I had learned so well to do without?

I must shake off this shameful mood! Even to consider it was to acknowledge its power. I would go to San Moisè and look at the people eating their macaroni, and listen to my old gentleman scolding over his salad!

In the cool, shaded hall, with its glass roof pleasantly awned over, I saw my railway acquaintance—Weston was his name—sitting at a little table before an assortment of curious, many-limbed sea creatures, trying them in turn, and making wry faces, while Domenico stood a little apart, anxiously watching for the dawn of a look of approval. I had bargained to sit among men and let their prosaic doings bring me to a prosaic self again, but here was Weston to talk and be talked to. This staggered the fool within me, and I turned from the door unseen. I felt impelled to go and seek my food where none of my countrymen might be met with, and threaded the little "Calli" at random, feeling lighter-hearted the deeper I dived into the crowded alleys. What pictures I found there! Dark-haired girls stood at the windows combing out their long locks, while they kept up a stream of gossip with their

neighbors over the way. No doubt it would have proved virulent backbiting could one have understood it; but it was so soft and sweet-sounding from their Venetian tongues that one fancied the cruelest epithets could scarcely wound more than a handful of rose leaves.

Handsome, mild-eyed women were sitting on low chairs before their dark doorways, with their babies at their breasts, as innocently as Raphael's Madonnas, and half-naked children leaned at their knees, doing nothing, and missing nothing. I had bought a bunch of deep-toned carnations somewhere on my way for the sake of their splendid tints, and the only begging I met with was when, now and then, some child would say, confidently looking up into my face, "Signore! give me a flower!" stretching out its hands and never doubting. It would run with its prize to its mother, who, though she pretended to chide, thrust the dark

red blossom into her braided hair, giving me a friendly smile and nod the while. Or she would lean and brush it over the cheek of the sleeping baby until it waked to crush the spicy petals in its plump little fist. Cooking was being done in dark, cavernous shops. Old women carried off steaming fish in dingy handkerchiefs, and a smoky oil-lamp showed gondolieri sitting over their wine, doubtless discussing their favorite subjects of wages or politics. The yellow rays of the lamp just showed the way from hand to mouth, falling upon their eager faces, and faintly indicating the figure of the hostess, the baby asleep over her shoulder, as she stood listening to their talk, flask in hand, and hand on hip. Pretty girls went by, clapping their heelless slippers on the pavement, and casting glances within which seemed to imply that Tonio or Biagio sitting there might be better employed in a little harmless

love-making than with politics and Valpolicella. It was all simple and natural; no looking backward or forward. The people seemed at ease in their poverty, the sky and the sun being always with them, and yesterday and to-morrow appeared as fevered fancies bred of civilization. I had wandered about for some time, not perceiving that I was hungry. Another hunger than that of the body had been soothed, or rather dulled, within me by the simple life around me, but now I was reminded by the comfortable, appetizing smell that I had not eaten for many hours.

The small wineshop was empty, save for a group of men, four or five of them, who sat at the table in the corner and took no notice of my entrance beyond looking up as my shadow darkened the threshold. This was, unlike the others, a bright, clean little room. Its pale blue plastered walls were stencilled with

a tidy pattern, colored prints of Umberto and Vittorio Emmanuele adorning them, and a coldly hideous plaster bust of "Il Re Galantuomo" occupied a conspicuous place. I sat down to eat my primitive dinner, and listen to the men's talk, unfathomable jargon though it was to me. They glanced once at me suspiciously as I strained my ears to understand it; then, seeming reassured, went on with their theme. One of them, an old man, thumped upon the table, and repeated "Garibaldi!" making the glasses ring. He seemed to connect no especial idea with this heroic name, but rather to announce it as a sort of talismanic formula whenever his companions, as far as I could make out, contradicted his opinions. Very likely neither he nor they knew that the great man had long been at rest; for Italians of their class are prone to take up an idea or a catchword, and go on living upon it—

or rather talking about it—long after it is dead to the news-reading world.

At last they rose from their seats, casting lots as to who should pay the score, and I was alone again—alone with that self that startled me as would a cage-born bird were it to stretch its wings for flight and beat its head against the bars. I made good my small reckoning and wandered out into the narrow streets. Utter weariness, kept off so far by this unknown mood, in itself an excitement, fell upon me as I purposely paced the darkening "Calli," and I thought with dull satisfaction how good it would be to fall asleep listening to the lapping of the water below. When I had reached home and had let myself in at the land entrance, groping my way up the murky stairs by the light of a match, I found a letter slipped under my door. I knew the handwriting. It was from my wife. She had not written for

some time, and this was a budget of news. So-and-so was engaged to So-and-so and was looking as though he repented it already. Bonnets were worn frightfully high again. Sir Edward Eustace was in Paris disgracing himself with a pretty actress. She, my wife, was going with her sister to Trouville, and was sure she would look quite shabby among all those charming toilets, and I was to paint as many pictures as I possibly could, and not waste my time falling in love with pretty Venetians. "You know you are awfully good-looking, dear boy, and I ought to be a jealous wife! But I am not, and the proof of this is that I'm going to stay away from you for some time yet, if you don't really want me—and I don't think you do. I can't say just when I shall come, but I'll let you know. Paris is cool, and we hear that Trouville is quite comfortable. You know I hate Venice; I never can forget the mosquitoes there!

In fact, my left arm has never been the same since. Don't make yourself ill with that horrid Italian cookery! You know how onions disagree with you, and how cross you are then! If you do get ill, be sure to have an English doctor. Have you come across the Fords? They left us the other day, and wanted your address, but I forgot to give it them. People say they are trying to run down young Newton, who has just come into his property; but he doesn't seem to see it! Your affectionate wife." When I had read it, I went to my balcony and leaned out in the still night air. The moon was gone, and only the brilliant stars shone down on sleeping Venice. The waves plashed gently against the steps, and a smell of seaweed mounted up to me refreshingly. In the opposite house a single window was lighted, showing a poor and dreary room. Within sat a sleepy woman rocking a cradle.

I had often watched her, for she had a sick child, whose fretful crying sometimes reached me across the narrow canal. She was young, and had a certain grace in the turn of her head; and though she was haggard and slipshod, her ways with the poor, pinched and mean-looking baby made her almost beautiful. Now she sat with her foot upon the cradle, her head drooped heavily. Every now and then the cradle would stop, and a thin, querulous wail come from it; and then she would begin her rocking again, until sleep once more overcame her.

At last, worn out, she crouched down upon the floor, her head laid close to the child's hand, her lips kissing it, and moving as if whispering baby-language of love and comfort.

A divine patience wrapped her round as with a garment, making the wretched room sacred and lovely.

It is a miserable platitude to

say that artists are prone to fancy. Had they none, they would not be artists. Not only every beauty belongs to us, but it develops new ones. We see what it would be under other circumstances; we live with it, know it, love it, and it becomes a part of ourselves. Deeper and deeper it sinks into our hearts, as do the traits of one well-beloved, and, at last, as happily-married men are said to forget their wives' features, so clearly do they see through them into the soul, so do we forget that beauty is beauty. We see only its relation to our diviner fibers. It ceases to be a mere perfection, and becomes a good. My sickly mood of the morning had passed away. My wife's letter had dispelled it, and now I could think of my beautiful Venetian as of a precious picture which I was longing to copy for my own possession — nothing more. I had never seen such a perfectly beautiful woman. Who—though

it seems contradictory to what I have been writing—who does not know the longing and despair at the sight of a divinely lovely thing?—the reaching out to it, the sense of immeasurable distance, the terrible void in our hearts when we say, "It is not ours," and the strangely lonely feeling that comes over us when we realize that it is not related to us even by the most gossamer thread of sympathy? For her I did not exist, or, strictly speaking, I only did so when moored before her window as a persistent, perhaps troublesome sketcher. She did not seem vain. Certainly she did not show herself so. What was I to her that her royal eyes should seek mine? Nothing! Had I sunk deep into the green water beneath her window, she would only have cried "Poerello!" and crossed herself with those white fingers. These were the thoughts which floated in my mind as I stood letting the silent night calm my fretful heart and

brain. I cannot tell if they were all true, and I see by what I have written that two beings may live in the same body: one cool and philosophical, the other weak and human in its longings. May God, who has thought fit to make our hearts of so many pieces, comfort and pardon them!

The days went on, and my picture with them. Once or twice she came to the window, but the old man leaned every day over the faded cushion in the warm sunshine. He seemed to take a curious, lethargic interest in my doings, and I grew to fancy that his face varied as he looked at me. Sometimes it seemed friendly; at others, suspicious; then cold, as if I had failed in something he had expected from me. Fancies of mine these, too! I was trying at home in my studio to seize on my canvas my broken glimpses of the daughter's face—she could only be his daughter—and I would come back with some line or

small detail in my eye, and put it down quickly, saying, "This none can take from me. It is mine at last!" Those long hot days of dream-like possession and quiet work were infinitely soothing. It was as though they must last forever, and I lived in a world of calm, with nothing to wish for; no memory, and no anticipation. The cool, misty sunrise, bountiful noonday, gorgeous sunset, and the warm, still night followed each other, their comfort sinking into my spirit, and touching with healing the sore places which even the happiest of us has somewhere in his heart. Looking back upon that time, I see that it was as near to happiness as I have ever come. Do not think that I like to be away from my wife. Her ways are very pretty and she makes one's surroundings very charming. Of course, every man is glad to have his wife with him. But it seemed to me that in this dreamland there was

neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Besides, we had lived together for many years, though I was but thirty-two and she twenty-six. I have told you that we married so young. We have always got on well with each other, whether together or apart, and you know that we have never quarreled, which is more than most couples can say. Perhaps —but no matter!

My sketch of the old palazzo was finished, but I had begun another, this time simply with a hope of seeing the lovely woman who lived within. Her perfect beauty almost wearied me; it was so difficult to grasp. Sometimes, as I sat there, she would come and stand at the window for a moment, and then it was as if the sun broke from behind a cloud, and I was too dazzled to calmly stare at it. She never wore any other dress but the old-fashioned white jacket or bed-gown, as it used to be called, which Italian women of

the humbler classes seem to affect when at home. But she could have chosen nothing more grateful to an artist's eye. It was cut somewhat low about the neck and simply gathered into a band, her magnificent throat rising from it untrammeled with all its finely swelling curves and tender shadows. Her splendid shoulders showed their outlines through the thin linen as do those of an antique bust under the gathered folds of the cunningly worked marble. Her sleeves only half hid the firmly rounded arms with the smoothly modeled transition from hand to wrist and the lissom play of muscle. How I used to be perplexed by the shining disorder of her hair! Sometimes it lay low in a wavy coil; sometimes she had carelessly gathered it high upon her head, leaving free the strong yet flowing outline of her neck where it joined the shoulder; and once or twice she looked out, evidently in the act

of combing it, with its golden waves spread out and flowing down out of sight. But in all this there appeared no vanity, and her face wore the lovely unconsciousness of a child who has not yet looked in a mirror. Her eyes had the direct gaze of a child too, knowing nothing of the world and never fearing to be misunderstood.

I could easily have learned her name. The gondoliere surely could have told it me, or at least discovered it for me; but I did not like the man's inquisitive looks, and preferred her nameless and inviolate. I tried to fancy how other women's faces would look beside hers, but they seemed to fade, or I forgot them. Even that of my wife, the joy of milliners, for it persisted in looking charming in spite of their disguises, even that one I could not see distinctly. It was impossible to fancy this face with a fashionable bonnet above it. It seemed only fit for a halo or

a laurel wreath, though I had no doubt that, being a woman, she would have preferred the last Paris monstrosity. They all do. I had no desire to know her. Very likely her head was as empty as the usual Italian girl's, and contained a prayer or two in Latin which she could not understand, a dimly patriotic sentiment, and a love story, past, present, or to come; perhaps a few French words and a bit of Tasso. What could she have to think about? Probably that she would like to have a gondola, the two gondolieri in livery, a box at the theater, and, alas! enough to eat every day; that the old fisherman gave very few fish for the money, and that she would like to be sitting in the Piazza, in front of Florian's, listening to the band, eating ices, and looking at the slim young officers, in case that one already had not taken her fancy. What manner of fellow might he be? Dark-eyed, of course, small brained,

and good-looking, destined to make her wretched, and already ogling some vacant-faced "Inglisina" with a fancied fortune. No! This was desecration! Let her think nothing rather than this poor stuff! Still, it seemed to me that a look of anxiety or excitement, different from the expression of daily care which I had remarked before, was gradually stamping itself on her face, as if something had waked up behind it, and were troubling her. Alas, that such a face could fade, such eyes weep! They were born to shine and rejoice like the sun in the heavens!

II.

THE golden gloom of San Marco — the gold-encrusted vault like a golden cave hollowed out by the sea—the arches so rounded, as though by the continual ebb and flow of the waves—who does not know them? Over all, permeating all, is a golden light, as if penetrating through deep amber waters which might roll on far above our heads, leaving this strange and precious shrine inviolate and immortal. This mysterious beauty I was trying to realize, as I sat half hidden in a shadowy corner on Corpus Domini morning. The feast fell late that year, and the heat

without made the mellow shade within the glorious church all the more delicious and refreshing.

My gondoliere had waked me early, telling me that all the foreigners would be there—as if that could be a temptation to me! I went in the confidence of finding none, and proved right with the exception of my acquaintance, Weston, and a few forlorn-looking Germans, with shawls slung about their shoulders, who seemed awed and uncomfortable, and did not stay long. The heat had driven the crowd of tourists away from Venice. As for me, I went to see the Venetians, and from my corner I watched many a charming or characteristic group, for, as I told you, I like to be among unknown fellow-creatures, and to feel at liberty to watch them as from behind a mask. Most of them came and went airily and happily, as though their souls were not oppressed by any

great sins. Some came in a hurry, assisted at a single mass, and went out again; some followed the services from altar to altar, their faces gathering fervor as they went; and others settled down in quiet corners, apparently unconscious of everything around, their lips moving the while, and their eyes closed. Doubtless they were making progress in their own way. Whole families would straggle in and stand patiently behind others until these arose satisfied with their spiritual gains; and then each member, seizing the back of the hardly abandoned chair with a murmured "Pardon me," would establish itself for its share of spiritual refreshment, and become an object of envy to those behind.

Very charming it was to see even the poorest and shabbiest receive the holy water proffered from the outstretched fingers of a passer-by with a gentle inclination of the head, and a half

smile of thanks, unembarrassed, polished, and impersonal. Let Italians alone, and they will always do the right thing. Nothing but civilization can make them tactless or awkward. As I watched the ever-flowing stream of worshipers, I said to myself that fate could not be suspended for them even in the sacred shadow of San Marco, that ours follows us at all times, and that among those many lives there must be many also whose destiny was reaching its decisive point under my very eyes. Some happiness was expanding like a child's bubble, growing more perfect every moment, and shimmering with rainbow tints; some other just swelled to its most airy symmetry, then breaking and vanishing with its loveliest colors upon it. It was a strange thing to feel one's self in contact with these other lives; to say that this great crowd was at that very moment holding bursting

joys or silent tragedies; that a look, a sign, an absence, perhaps a prayer, were deciding the issue; that what was but a second ago a rainbow glory was now gone, and that some other was mounting full and radiant in the lightness of hope, to break against the ceiling in its turn. As I sat thinking these thoughts, and watching the crowd ebb and flow, came the hour of high mass, and with it, what startled me like an unearthly presence, my beautiful Venetian stood before me. She was looking down, her hands clasping her prayer-book. An old black dress —I could see how shabby it was—flowed in majestic folds around her, and over her head was thrown a rusty lace veil; but on that head all the glory of San Marco seemed to shine, and to cast back a glory from her dazzling hair.

So beautiful, so unconscious, and so proud withal, I have never seen a woman look. She

wore her old black stuff as royally as though it were velvet and ermine, and a crown seemed to hover above her brow, held so high, with eyes half drooped—for what was the surging crowd to her? Close behind her stood an old man, very feeble, forlorn, and more than shabby, in an antiquated gondoliere livery. It looked as if it would fall to dust at a breath; indeed, it seemed to have been long buried away in some moldy place—a vault, perhaps—while its original wearer had turned to dust and ashes undisturbed within it. On the man's arm was a great brass badge such as the gondoliere of noble houses wear, bearing a coat of arms which proclaimed even to one ignorant of heraldry that it was a proud one. He seemed to take pride in it himself, for it was as burnished as the beak of a gondola on a festival day, in curious contrast with his ruinous appearance and spectral unreality. Notwithstanding his feebleness,

he was evidently the girl's only protector, and soon darted with trembling agility upon a kneeling-chair, scarcely waiting for its occupant to rise and cross herself, before he had dragged it away and pushed it before his young mistress. He fell stiffly on his knees behind her, as she sank forward upon it and buried her face in her hands before opening her worn book, which appeared to be full of devout little leaflets and cut paper traceries with pictures in their midst.

I noticed then how transparent were those hands. Aristocratic and innately noble in form and movement, they had yet a weary look of work about them. She wore old-fashioned netted mittens which did not hide them, and I could see that their hollows were faintly bluish, and that their articulations were marked by the delicate cameo-tinted depressions. She seemed as unconscious of them as of her face,

as queens might be with whom all was sacred from remark. When she opened her book she did not look into it much, but raised her eyes to the golden ceiling, and there let them vaguely dwell on the mosaic saints, as though she saw beyond them. Occasionally she would drop her glance to the altar and dreamily turn over a page. As she did so, one of her little pictures fluttered from between the leaves and fell at my feet, and as I sprang from my shelter to raise it, our eyes met. I had never thought of her blushing, and now the marvelous, instantaneous rosy red surprised me so utterly that I gazed at her in enchanted astonishment. How divinely, unapproachably exquisite this sunrise was!

People who have exchanged even a passing look can never again quite be strangers to each other. Her gaze seemed to betray startled recognition; mine was full of artistic delight, and

a sudden sense of acquaintance with this beautiful woman came over me. I tried to look away, but I could not.

I felt that I had kissed that hair, held close those tender hands, laid my lips upon the white eyelids, and mingled my breath with hers. There was even a little shadow in that stately throat, where it seemed to me that I had often pressed my brow! No longing oppressed me in this hallucination. All had been mine, was mine, and would be mine always. Yes, we would go out into the sunlight together when the mass was over, and in the gondola she would lay her head softly upon my shoulder, and we would not need to speak. Then at home she would put off her poor festival dress, and lean with me from the window watching the sun's rays playing through the water and the pigeons circling above. Not even then would we speak; for what could we say to each other that had not been said

long ago? The golden day would sink and still find us hand in hand, unquestioning, content, and confident, with the utter trust of long companionship. Could she, too, be dreaming this strange dream?

She was gazing at the saints no longer, and her eyes were resting, not on mine but deep within them, full of old memories and sweet future joys, and I gazed back and shared them with her. At last the mass was over, and she rose and broke the spell. Thank God that she did! I watched her as she passed slowly down through the dusky glow, followed by her strange old retainer, and I sat transfixed, fearing lest I should do some violent and unseemly thing if I moved. We all know such moods, when everything around us looks new and incongruous. Our most accustomed movements seem to us as though made for the first time, and we almost fear to fall, like a child who

is but just learning to walk alone.

An abyss is beneath us, the walls are closing around us, and if we stretch out our hands we feel that they belong to another and must touch some object far beyond our reach. I dragged myself from my chair as if I were uprooting a rock, but some hidden impulse forced me to move, and helped me to make my way through the crowd, and out of the church. The same imperious force carried me to the landing-place at the Piazzetta, and then I knew that it was she that had drawn me. She was just stepping into a covered gondola, and I watched her backing into the hearse-like thing, not as we foreigners awkwardly try to do, but disappearing into darkness with the stateliness of a queen, bowing a gracious acknowledgment to her people's homage.

The shadowy old man took the oar, and feebly pushed off amid

the sarcasms of some sturdy young gondolieri who stood waiting for customers, and the black gondola moved away over the glittering water. I might easily have called one of the idle gondolieri and followed her. But there are things one cannot do. I had no curiosity, for I knew where she lived; and for the mere pleasure of floating in the wake of her beautiful presence I could not iusult her by pursuing her.

I waited until I had seen the gondola turn into a side canal before taking one myself, having given my own a holiday in honor of the high festival, and now I simply said to the man, "Take me for a turn." He had very likely been watching me, and fancied a hidden meaning in my order—for every Venetian is over-subtle—or did he only want to escape from the fierce midday sun? I let him take his way, and closed my eyes to the hot glare which pierced even through the thick linen curtains, for I had chosen

my conveyance with an awning. I could feel that the man was rowing fast, and I thought it was the usual story—namely, that he was trying to outstrip some familiar enemy of his. I felt, too, that he was rapidly dashing around corners, and heard the warning cry of "O' stalli," heard the ripple and swish of a boat before me, and waited for the moment to come when the rivals shall pause upon their oars to abuse each other, and had already steeled my ears to their furious adjectives, when my boat stopped suddenly. No wordy storm followed, and I looked from under the curtain. He had brought me up to the door of the Palazzo, and now was waiting, whether simply to let the old man land his young mistress, or to show me how clever he could be in what seemed to him a love affair, I do not know. All I know is that, as I drew aside the awning, our eyes met again. She had just put her foot on the step, her

hand laid royally on the trembling arm of her shabby retainer, held out as a proper gondoliere should present it, with bent elbow, the ancient badge gleaming in the sun. She turned to gather up the train of her old-fashioned gown, and if she understood my eyes aright she must have read in them shame and appeal at seeming to have tracked her like the vulgarest of admirers. She was gone in a moment, and the old man proceeded to row slowly off, turning to look at me curiously. His gondola was certainly not his own; it was too new and fine for that. Probably some one had lent it him—for Italians have always a friend in the background—and now he was going to restore it to its owner, and hobble back on foot by the side alleys. He seemed, however, to have made up his mind that there was no hurry, and drifted along, contenting himself with shoving his oar against a wall, or paddling in the

shallow water, persistently glancing back at me, almost as though he would have spoken to me had I come near enough. My gondoliere in the mean time was making odd maneuvers, turning round and going a little way, then, with a push of his oar, darting back again, to again remain motionless. At last I was irritated into asking him what the devil he was about, at which he only shrugged his shoulders, and rowed round a corner, bringing me by cross cuts into the Grand Canal again.

I told him to take me back to the Piazzetta. An irresistible longing seized me—a longing to put my foot upon the steps where hers had rested—and I yielded to it.

That night, when I found myself alone in my bare chamber, a strange spirit fell upon me. The moon was coldly shining on, making the water below ripple in silvery fretting against the high whitewashed ceiling. I

looked about me. There was a comfort in the very barrenness of the place. Barring my pictures, my belongings might have been carried away on my back. The complications of years seemed suddenly to fall from me. It was so simple to be one's self alone, something different from what I had been hitherto—myself at last!

I took the candle and walked to the tarnished glass as in a dream, and stood looking at my face there. It looked back at me with the eyes of a stranger. I had never been fond of my own reflection, but now I examined it critically, and said to myself, with an artist's impersonal instinct, that it resembled a bad copy of some Giorgione — the same dark eyes, the same eager unsatisfied look upon the strongly marked features, the same melancholy yet violent mouth. Fascinated, I gazed on at this familiar face and questioned those eyes which were not mine.

A weird and frightful feeling it gave me, but I could not look away. Would the man in the glass speak? Speak and solve the horrible riddle? Who was he? Was I going mad? I was mad already! Those eyes would presently roll in frenzy, and strange words would break from those lips. My fearful dream of the morning—fearful because so sweet—had been but the preface to this hideous thing! Those sensations were no part of myself, and scarcely were they over but I had forgotten them. They found no echo in me and died away like a musical tone when the hand has quitted the keys. When I had left the Piazzetta, I had borne about with me all day a weary, cheerless feeling, and a dull pain somewhere; but that vision in San Marco had not returned to my mind. That I should not have felt humiliated and dishonored in my own sight by that moment of mad attraction was only another proof that

something in my brain had sunk into a stupor, to wake shrieking, perhaps, when I felt most tranquil. I had often heard of such things. What would be done with me? Would my wife, poor thing, come to find me in a madhouse, raving of another woman? Would she ever find me at all? What would become of my pictures? Was there an English Consul? And would he be called in? These and a thousand other fevered thoughts darted like lightning through my darkened mind. Good God! What alien things might my wife hear from me! Should I ever be able to say, "I am innocent?" How did the words sound? My stiff lips made a fearful effort to utter them, and, as I saw those other lips move, an awful horror came over me. What would they say? What cry of condemnation would burst from them? But I never heard it.

Something strange had happened. I was lying on the floor

in the dark with a wounded fist, from which I could feel the warm blood flowing down my sleeve. The sharp, throbbing pain brought me to my senses, and I staggered to my feet and groped for a light. My candle had rolled away somewhere, but I found the matches and struck one. My first look was at the mirror. It lay in splinters at my feet. Those terrible lips mute forever. In my agony I must have struck at them with my clenched fist. It was burning painfully; but what did that matter? My mind was clear again, and my senses were mine still.

An Englishman never succumbs to a disastrous moral mood without asking himself if it be not a physical one after all, and as I bathed my wounded hand I decided that the hot sun, no breakfast, and a long day of fasting—for I had forgotten to eat—must answer for this. They did answer for it perfectly, and

I was satisfied. I bound up my cuts as well as I could with my other hand. The bleeding had stopped, and the damage was not so bad as I had thought. The positive breaking of the glass must have been done by my seal ring, whose bearings were riven across. When my gondoliere came for orders in the morning, he stared at my bandaged hand and haggard face, for I had not slept, and I could read in his eyes that the night had left its traces. A bath in Lido waves would efface them perhaps, and thither I told him to row me. It was early, and a Sunday, and the water was crowded with fishing boats whose owners had come for mass. The painted sails, from deep orange and olive to palest citron yellow, stood out gloriously from the clear morning sky, and lay mirrored on the gently heaving water, in now broken, now blending sheets of magnificent color.

A pleasantly convalescent feeling stole over me, together with the complacent interest we feel in small things, on returning to life again after a long illness: and the painted cocks, rising suns, and protecting saints on the tinted sails pleased me as freshly as though I had never seen them before. A plunge in the sea did the rest, and restored me to my daily self. My inexplicable mood of the previous day hung like a black curtain in the background, but it troubled me no longer, and I would not try to lift it. As I landed at San Moisè for my breakfast, feeling a convalescent's hunger within me, I met Weston, and he joined me in the meal. I was just in the disposition which makes one willing to share anybody's company, and we sat and talked amicably and long over our coffee. He was full of a picture which he wanted to show me. What was it? Where was it? I asked. But to such questions

the amateur antiquary never answers, and I put them mechanically. I hate being taken to see unknown gems, unartistic as it may sound. They are always failures, or at the best they turn out to but tolerable copies. "I'll only tell you this!" said he. "The Accademia might be thankful to get the thing on its walls!" And he went on, "You don't want to go—I can see that; but you'll be grateful to me!" As there was no escape, I was not loath to have done with the matter, and agreed to his proposal that he should fetch me on foot at four o'clock that afternoon. It was better to get the thing over rather than break into a day of work. Moreover, I felt that, left alone with myself, I might be tempted to stir the black curtain, and I feared to disturb its folds. So at four o'clock came Weston to my lodgings, the position of which I had described accurately enough to prevent him from missing his

way. He looked around him seemingly rather surprised that I should prefer to live in such a place, for he himself was boarding at a "pension," which would have been a hell to me. When he had inspected my simple bedchamber, he said, "Only one room?" and I weakly answered that I had a sort of studio beyond. "Let's see it," said he. "One moment—just to turn some bad sketches to the wall," I said, and quickly concealed my attempt at the portrait and my studies of the old Palazzo. They were mine only, and I could not endure to have indifferent eyes upon them. I did not stop to think: my instinct bade me hide them. When I let him in, he seemed satisfied with my industry at least, and was kind enough to praise a good deal. I am not a bad painter, and know that some of his commendation was not unmerited. "Glad to see you don't glaze over or mix your colors," said he. "It

makes nasty, dirty work! Well, I envy you," he continued, sitting astride of a chair, his chin upon his folded arms. "I don't care to envy people, but I don't mind saying if I do. That's a bit of work I don't suppose I shall get to in the next ten years—if I ever do at all. It's thorough; it's clever, too! By Jove, it's capital!" It did not consist of much more than a couple of those "slimy poles" which my wife judged so contemptuously, a bit of water, with the sun's rays darting deep down into it, a rugged end of wall, and an azure stretch of sea and sky beyond—lonely, sun-steeped, suggestive. Away from the original it pleased me pretty well, though I remember my sense of despair when I put up my colors, feeling that it was but a wretched daub after all, and that any further touches would only make it a worse one.

"Well, if you want to see *painting*, come along," said Wes-

ton, getting up and stretching himself; "if we don't go now we shall have a bad light. I told the old fellow we were coming at four or thereabouts."

Who "the old fellow" might be did not excite my curiosity, and I let Weston, who was proud of his knowledge of the complicated streets, lead me as he would.

"I have no idea where we are," I said at last.

"Ah, that's part of the charm!" he answered. "You know the fellows in the 'Arabian Nights' never knew how they got to the enchanted cave or how to find it again." He stopped at a grand looking old portal. "Dear me!" he exclaimed, "I quite forgot to tell you that the picture is not for sale; so for Heaven's sake take care what you say! The man is as poor as a rat, but he wont part with it, and my being allowed to bring you is a special favor. I came to know him at our pension. He gives some

German girls Italian lessons there—reads Dante with them for about one centime the hour! Somehow we put our heads together over a wretched daub in the salon while his pupils were keeping him waiting one day, and he couldn't hold his tongue about his gem, and carried me, when he had done with Dante, straight off to worship it."

"I can't say he said a word too much; I was down on my knees to it!"

"Oh, I daresay it's clever!" I said, wearily.

"Clever?" he echoed, from the flight above me. "Clever? you don't call the *sun* clever, do you? Just wait till you've seen it!"

Below, as in all Venetian houses, we had entered a hall with a door upon the water at the opposite end, and from this hall the great forlorn staircase, unswept and with broken steps, led us upward until we reached a broad landing. "Here we

are!" said Weston, pulling a ragged string which served as a bell-rope. A feeble bell tinkled and bumped against the door inside, and at last we heard a heavy halting step within.

"He is a Conte, so take care to address him properly," whispered Weston, as the door opened slowly after some fumbling at the lock. "All right!" I nodded, and we entered. Before me stood the old servant, his badge upon his sleeve.

Where was I? Was I *there*—in the Palazzo? I almost reeled with the shock. I should see her! I forgot the black curtain —forgot the hour in San Marco —I forgot all but that this man must bring me to her. She lived here—of course! Then it flashed upon me that it was no wonder I did not recognize the place. We had entered from the street, and I had never seen the interior of the house. How could I have known it from its land side? My whole being leaped forward

while Weston half-pityingly murmured, "Queer place—isn't it?" He could not know that to me it was Paradise!

The old man hobbled on before us, straightening his bowed back and trying to hold up his gray head gallantly as we followed him through the bare, cold rooms, where the stagnant atmosphere of loneliness was so chilly in contrast to the warm outer air. He paused before a closed door, and my heart beat violently.

With much ceremony he ushered us in, and from the end of the long room a familiar figure advanced to meet us—familiar, but that the old dressing-gown had been exchanged for a suit of black, antiquated in cut and whitened at the seams, and that the listless face I had so often seen at the window looked startled and eager as the old servant made a rapid sign, incomprehensible to me, which brought a faint tinge of hectic into his master's shrunken cheeks.

It deepened as he ceremoniously extended his hand in welcome, and I fancied that the thin fingers trembled in mine. He had a penetrating glance, which from a distance I had not fully realized in the pale, lusterless eyes; and now he directed it persistently upon me. He must surely have recognized me, but of this he gave no sign. Rather he seemed determined to ignore my identity in a stagey sort of way, as though he and I knew more of each other than appeared. It seemed to me that we were like two diplomats playing at making believe, and it struck me as being so much of a piece with the superfluous Venetian wiliness that I humored him in his little comedy for the sake of the good acting. Weston had introduced me in flowery "Ollendorf" Italian, as a "celebrated English painter," and the old gentleman —for he certainly was one—pretended to be surprised, and made a polite remark that I was very

young to have already attained fame, congratulating me upon it and asking me in a paternal way if I had made any studies in Venice. I remembered the hours he had passed in watching me from his window and answered, reddening, that I had attempted some.

"And may I ask what points of view in our city you have so honored?"

I answered this astounding question by giving him some names of places at random, which he accepted with the air of playing at money with a child. Had the Signore been here long? "No, not long, and time in Venice seemed always too short"; at which he made an accomplished bow and waved his thin, elegant hands deprecatingly, as if to say, "You are too good, but I accept it in the name of Venice!" Weston was getting fidgety, and evidently gauged the waning light, for he interrupted us in a flow of politeness

by remarking to the Conte that his treasure would not be seen to advantage later. "Ah, yes, the picture!" he answered, absently, as though it were a mere accessory to our visit, and rose to lead the way. It took us through more bare rooms, with rough boards in the place of windows, and for furniture a few decrepit gilded chairs, of which the stuffs had lost all resemblance of color and texture.

"You will pardon me, Signore!" said he, turning round grandly, "it is so hot in summer that we prefer to have our apartments not too full." Hot? There was the chill of the grave upon them! At last we came to a little room hung with faded red damask, and he stood aside, inviting us to pass.

Opposite the door, and glowing in the rich afternoon light, hung the picture. Weston was right. It was indeed one to kneel to. Not that the subject was a sacred one—for it was only a portrait—

but one so thrillingly living as I have never seen. The style was utterly unlike that of any known painter; but could this one be named he would rank with the greatest. From a rather small canvas looked out the brilliantly youthful face of a young cavalier with fair flowing love-locks falling over his broad lace collar. A somewhat darker mustache shaded softly the smiling, breathing mouth, whose lips were daring and amorous, and fresh as spring in their enchanting bloom. Under dark, finely-penciled eyebrows, audacious as the lips, and yet thoughtful, a pair of eyes like sapphire stars shone out fully and confidently upon the beholder—eyes so dazzling, deeply blue, and so radiant with youth and happiness, that one closed one's own as though one had gazed at the sun. A soft blaze of triumphant beauty seemed to emanate from the picture — so indescribably beautiful and joyous was this

unknown face. I stood entranced, forgetful of all but the glorious light in those dark blue eyes, forgetting even to wonder how this marvelous effect had been attained.

"I see you appreciate it," said the Conte.

I stammered something, but my face must have spoken for me better than my tongue, for he said, "Come to see it whenever you like! You will be welcome!" At that moment a little door, concealed in the damask paneling, opened very cautiously. The Conte stood with his back to it, and did not see what I saw, though that was little enough. A white arm was leaning against the door-post, and resting against the hand, half turned aside, a coil of golden hair left a little alabaster ear free to listen to what was going on within. The other hand held the latch, as if to draw it at a moment's notice. The Conte changed his position, and the door softly closed. When

we had followed him back to the dreary room which was evidently his place of abode, an odd, old-fashioned collation stood upon the table. Curiously formed decanters of gilded glass filled with some deep red and sickly green liquid, funnel-shaped glasses, also gilded, on fine twisted stems, and fruit in a dish of common white ware, were grouped around a little painted saucer containing a handful of quaint-looking sugar-plums of the kind the nuns make in their convents.

The Conte pressed us to partake of this queer little feast, and we having signified that either red or green would be a favor from his hand, he proceeded to fill the delicate glasses, and we sat sipping the fiery cloying stuff and bowing ceremoniously to each other; he with the air of entertaining at a princely table, and indeed his grand manner cast quite a luster of opulence about him. It was growing late, and we rose to take leave, with

thanks which did not need to be exaggerated to please him, for they were those of artists who had looked upon a masterpiece. He accompanied us through two or three of the desolate rooms and then left us, after more ceremonies, to the old servant who stood waiting at the door. He scrutinized my face and sidled up to me, letting Weston go out first, so that I fancied he was going to speak to me. What he could have had to say, Heaven knows! I took a five-franc piece from my vest pocket, and pressed it discreetly into his hand; then he, bowing and astonished, whispered, "You may trust me."

Why I was to trust him, and what was to be intrusted, was a mystery I have never understood.

I can only explain it by supposing that his old brains were a little crazed, and that he took me for another person.

"What do you think of the picture *now?*" broke out Weston when the door had closed behind

us. "Wasn't I right about it?" "I can never thank you enough for having taken me there," I answered. "Ah, I knew you'd say so!" said he, and we fell to discussing the wonderful painting. I hate to talk of what I admire; I hate to anatomize their beauty, and it requires an effort most distasteful to me to express an impression when required to do so. But this effort I made for Weston's sake as well as for my own, not wishing to be thought indifferent, and my companion was satisfied. He could not know that another was haunting me — that my pulses were beating, that my brain was burning, and that my hand lay upon the black curtain with a fearful temptation to tear it aside, and to stand face to face with what was beyond.

"The old fellow is a real count," he went on, "and his ancestors had Doges among them. He is the last of the Barbarigos. He ran down hill

like all those extravagant old Venetians. Splendid fools they were, too, and spent more and got poorer with every generation. The whole palace belonged to them once; now it's all sold—all but this one floor, which the old man wont give up. People here have a way of selling their houses by bits. He and his old ghost, the servant, must starve there pretty badly! There is a daughter, too, somewhere; but whether she lives there or has gone into a convent, I don't know. I saw no signs of her."

"How did you find all this out?" I asked, for the sake of saying something.

"Oh, my landlady, who keeps the *pension*, knows all about them; she is a Venetian herself. He wont show himself among his countrymen—too proud for that; but he creeps about giving a lesson or two to the foreigners. I know I'd give him a thousand pounds for that picture if I had the money! He's a fool not to

sell it for bread and butter!" I turned and looked up at the windows instinctively, though the Conte could not have understood our talk even had he overheard it. Above me leaned out his daughter, quickly disappearing at my upward glance, Weston walked unconscious by my side. But for me he was a thousand miles away.

III.

WHAT happens after a certain point or wish has been attained, or something unexpected in the way of joy or sorrow has befallen us? Generally nothing.

The outer world remains the same, whether we smile or weep, dream or do; we fit back into our grooves as I did into mine, trying to be too busy to find time to ask myself what curious power had been at work in me for the last few days. I repeated to myself that the strange morning in San Marco had been the natural result of the heat and no breakfast, and this served to explain the rest.

As we are not responsible for the madness done in dreams, neither was I to be accountable for this flight out of my true nature. Would it happen again? and how could I guard against it? Best, certainly, by not returning to the Palazzo Barbarigo, though the Conte had told me I would be welcome. And yet this seemed throwing away a joy given me with open hands by heaven itself. It would be almost sinful not to study the picture!

We all know what we do in our dreams. We tempt other men's wives who are sacred or indifferent to our waking eyes, we kiss lips we have never longed for, look on quietly at the death agonies of our nearest ones, and bury our life's love with a curious consciousness that it is not dead after all. We visit places where we have never been, and weep over old associations which never existed; fight enemies whom we forget by daylight, or get mortal wounds from the hands dearest

to us. These creatures are not ourselves. We do not say we will not sleep for fear of committing phantom deadly sins, but lay our heads on our pillows, pleasantly wondering what we shall do in dreamland, enjoying the prospect of the entertainment before us, and the waking to find that we are innocent, and have the exciting experience without damage to our souls. Is not the thrill of recollection—the morning consentment to the night's wild doings as sinful as any of our imaginary crimes? Let the clergymen settle it between them!

I once knew a man who for years was pursued by a horrible dream, and always waked to despise himself. In this dream he and his brother were condemned to death for some unknown misdeed, and at the last moment there always came a pardon for one of them. For which should it be? My friend invariably said, "Go *you* and die!—You never

loved life as I do!—you have less to lose!" and waked horrified at his choice.

The dream returned more and more frequently, and he felt a burden upon his soul as though he were indeed his brother's murderer.

Once within the dream no struggle of conscience could help him—he was in it and could not escape from its thrall. At last he forced himself to fall asleep with the firm resolution that he would not yield to it, should the terrible temptation assail him, and he awoke delivered. His soul had fought and conquered, and as he opened his eyes he was on the way to the scaffold by his own choice, victor at last! The dream never returned, though for fifteen years it had so often tortured him; and now, having trodden it under foot, he knows that he is safe from it forever, and no longer dreads the night and sleep. Could I not, as he, arm my soul beforehand for the

fight? If I do not conquer this waking dream it should not be my fault, I told myself. Still, it was a pity about the picture. It could do me no harm to go there but a few times again. Was I, a strong man, to turn from danger? In this way I reasoned with myself, and administered weak and wavering counsel to the creature within us who is always so pleased to receive it. I cannot tell why I am writing all this, sitting in my lonely study with the roar of London around me — unless it is that I must speak to some one. You who read will perhaps understand me, though I have not understood myself; but you will never know my name. Presently my wife—pretty creature—will come home from her ball, full of reflected brightness and beaming with remembered compliments, and Venice will sink into the waves again —so let me write on. I struggled in so far that I did not go back to the picture, beautiful and pre-

cious though it was. But I went several times to see Weston, hoping to meet the Count Barbarigo somewhere about the place, and that perhaps he would press me to come with him and have another look at his treasure and then — but I never saw him. But perhaps his German pupils had gone away or had tired of Dante. I had learned by this time to manage my gondola for myself, and used to go out into the warm still night, and push away into the dark canals or rest under the mighty span of the Rialto, alone with the waves and the stars. Venice was mine then. I folded her in my arms and laid my head upon her marble breast and was still. The enchantment of those hours cannot be spoken, but it will never leave me. Alone, freed for the moment from the present, with the mystery and beauty all my own, I went whither I would as a disembodied soul might wander through strange worlds.

I was myself during those solitary hours of consolation. Had they but remained such!

One night when I had gone early to rest, weary with my day's work, I awoke to see the brilliant late moon shining in at my uncurtained window. I heard a neighboring church clock strike twelve, and, as though there were an irresistible charm in the witches' hour, I rose and dressed myself quickly and stole down the silent stairs to my gondola, which was fastened to a ring at the water door. I got into it as in a dream, and in a dream I pushed it onward. Whither was I going? A voice within me said, "Do not ask!" and I glided on past inky black portals and murky corners, my oar dipping stars from the dark water, and its sound seeming almost sacrilege in that wave murmuring stillness. At last I came to a broader space, where the moon made long silver tracks before me — paths of light, which, were

I to follow them, I thought must lead me out into a calmer world forever.

I have always loved the moonlight, and have often pictured to myself another sphere where we should look again upon the faces of those we love shining in its blue radiance, and where all would be as peaceful as its light; no passions, no laughter or wild rejoicings—no tears and no longings—only a twilight of content, with nothing more to lose.

What infinite rest comes with the thought!

The silver paths led me indeed to another world, but not a calmer one. My gondola lay before the Palazzo Barbarigo. Its time-worn front looked white and fair in the moonlight which, like death, lays its hand on rugged faces and smoothes the years and the wrinkles.

I lay back in the boat, gazing upward.

Fate had brought me there—or at least I chose to call it so—and

why should I turn away? I must wait for something to happen.

This was but the prelude to strange music, and soon unearthly chords would strike the air.

A window opened. Had she heard the plash of my oar, and was she anxious to see who was passing the lonely canal at that late hour, or had the same impelling power drawn her from her sleep? She came—a white figure—and leaned out. I could see her clearly in the almost dazzling moonbeams. They fell upon her face, her hastily caught-up shining hair, her marble hands! She would see me too—*must* see me! An agony of shuddering, guilty hope possessed me, and I could not—would not move.

At last I heard a faint cry, and her half-bared arms were stretched out to me—white and tender as the moonlight itself. I felt them around me—so did distance vanish between us! and mine were raised to meet them. Then every pulse seemed stopping, and

a shiver ran through my raging blood. She was gone! But it was not yet over — I must wait. She could not leave me so! Hours and minutes might have gone by—I could only count time by the slow throb of my heart. Suddenly it gave a fearful bound and stood still; for the heavy door slowly opened and she was standing on the marble steps — those arms so near!

I have read in novels that in such moments a prayer rises to the lips of the tempted one. It is not true. I did not wish to pray! I *would* not! I sprang from my boat, and for one unspeakable moment I held her to me.

Our eyes fed upon each other, our lips met as softly as the petals of a flower fold and close at sunset — then I broke from her in wild horror while she gazed at me bewildered as one who is startled from a dream. I see her face now—I shall see it always. How I got into my gondola and how I

reached home I cannot remember. I suppose the deftness of sleep-walkers protected me. I perfectly recollect, however, fastening the boat to the wall, groping carefully up my stairs, and laying myself down upon my bed, holding thought at arm's length until sleep fell upon me—a long sleep, such as we are told that only the innocent enjoy. I forget what I did the next day; I only remember that I did not go out into the daylight. I felt a mark of infamy upon my brow, and that it must be visible to all—and yet, what crime had I committed?

But one kiss — ah! so short! A numb feeling that I could not live with such a self arose within me. I must rebuild my conception of an honorable man and make myself at home in it, else I could not play the part, and it *must* be played to the end! I had struck a rock, my ship was shattered, and I was struggling through the waves to reach a fragment of the tossing wreck.

Suddenly I heard steps upon the stairs — a light tread and a heavy one. The door opened, and my wife appeared upon the threshold, rustling and radiant with the satisfaction of a little dramatic surprise.

"Well, dear! Here I am at last! I knew I should astonish you, and I have been enjoying it all the way from Paris!" She went through a little ceremonial of embracing, and turned to the mirror — a new one since that fearful night.

"Oh dear! What a fright I am! Traveling does take it out of one so!" She smoothed down her ruffled hair, and shook out her skirts, then came and took me by the hand.

"I want to have a good look at you," she said, drawing me to the light. "Why, you're looking wretchedly, dear boy! What have you been doing with yourself. Eating something bad for you, and pining for a pretty Venetian—of course! Why don't

you say you've been pining for *me?* Do you know living in such a place is enough to make anybody ill! I thought I should never get up all those stairs alive —and I'm so awfully hungry! We'll leave my things here—just pay the man, dear, and get rid of him! and then you must take me to dine somewhere. We can go to one of the hotels—it's just the hour for the *table d'hôte*—and then we will come back and pack up your things, and perch somewhere. You can see to your pictures to-morrow, you know. Nobody will run away with them. What a lot!" she exclaimed, peering through the open door. "You've been delightfully industrious, I must say. If you've had a flirtation in spite of all that work it can't have been much of a one, so I forgive you."

It did not help me that she did, for she could not know what she had to pardon.

"We will go to the Grand Bretagne," she went on. "Don't you

remember we went there on our honeymoon, and it was so nice and bright? I passed it on my way here, and it looked as if there might be people. I hope there are—they amuse me so. And then I've brought such pretty gowns with me! Don't frown, dear old fellow! They weren't so *very* expensive! Paris things are lost upon you, but happily other people appreciate them."

When I saw them later, as she day by day displayed them, I did my best to praise the dainty adornments. It was not difficult to say that they were becoming, for her prettiness was of the kind that takes kindly to modern vagaries, and assimilates them. In her airy summer frills and flounces she looked like a charming butterfly just spreading its wings for flight, and, like a butterfly, she fluttered hither and thither. After a few days she said:

"Do you want me to stay here much longer?"

"Only to finish a sketch or two," I answered, for I longed to be alone with myself, though that was bitter company.

"Haven't you sketched all Venice by this time?" she asked, opening her blue eyes in a wondering way which had been much admired.

"Oh, there are some bits I put off to the last!" said I.

"Well, dear! I give you a week to paint them in! I dare say I can manage to get on! There must be an English circulating library—oh yes! Münster, I remember! and then I shall sleep a good deal. My complexion was dreadfully tried at Trouville! That sea air dries one up to a mummy! I do wish you'd been there! Of course, the women all wore the wildest costumes, and they all looked as though they had just come from the 'Variétés.' But they were enchanting nevertheless. Now, can you fancy a pink dress—crushed strawberries—covered with frogs?"

"No," said I, "I can't."

"Well, of course—how could you? But it was delicious! It was caught up by frogs as big as my fist—delightful bronzy green creatures with ruby eyes! She had a dog-collar of little ones and a huge one in her hat, and another sat somewhere on her parasol in a big bunch of green leaves. She was simply adorable!"

"Who?" I asked, absently.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you! It was Mlle. Bibi of the 'Variétés.' She sang some 'couplets' at the Casino divinely! Just *un tout petit peu polisson*—as they say there, but one does not mind that in bathing-places. Somehow the sea air makes a difference! I wonder where she got her gloves," she added, musingly. "They were ideal!"

"Somebody else got them for her, probably," I said.

"Oh, of course, *cela s'entend*—but you know what I mean!"

We were returning from the Lido, and my eyes were fixed

upon rosy Venice floating like a lotus on the still water.

"I declare you don't care a bit about what I've been saying," she pouted.

"Oh, yes, dear," I answered, "I heard it all!"

"Well, you *heard* it, of course—but you don't *care!* Venice has made a perfect bear of you. No matter—if you've enjoyed it. I've been enjoying myself, too—but it hasn't made a bear of *me!* There, don't be sulky! We're never cross, you know, and it would be rather late to begin—wouldn't it—after we've been married so many years? Let me see! How long *have* we been married?"

"It will be eight years next month," I answered.

"Dear me! I always have to count up. It always seems to me nine—anyway," she continued, smilingly; "I think we've been a model couple, and we will go on so!"

"Yes, we will go on so," I said. We spent our evenings in the

Piazza, where she liked the crowd and the music, and did not dislike to see the slim young officers lounge past, persistently bestowing admiring glances. She is fond of plenty of approval; and it is hers by right—for I have told you that she is charming—but she has never cared for any one's admiration, and she is the most unimpeachable of wives. She, at least, has nothing to reproach herself with.

My mornings were my own. Sometimes I tried to work, but I had a strange feeling that heart and brain had been taken out of my body, leaving me in their stead nothing but a certain instinct of self-preservation, which made me say and do what was expected of me—and no one missed them but myself.

At night, when I lay awake, wondering if I was going to be ill at last, my wife's quiet breathing told me that she had no anxiety, though I must have looked altered to most eyes; and early

in the morning, while she still slept, I went out with my sketching things. I think I must have often dozed in my gondola, for many of those hours are a blank to me, and I have very little work to show for them.

My pretty wife frowned a little as the fortnight was over and we yet lingered; but she has the sweetest temper in the world, and smiled at her own impatience—for she is graceful and gracious, and if she does not understand painting, and regards it only as the means to an end, it is not her fault. Heaven made her so—and a prettier object it certainly could not have invented! She was fond of searching old curiosity shops for odds and ends of lace and ancient jewelry, which quaintly set off her dainty little person. We ransacked half Venice in pursuit of an old paste buckle which she had caught sight of in passing somewhere, though just where she could not quite remember. She was quite

downcast when evening came and she had not found it, and the next afternoon resolved to try again.

"I never saw such a big satisfactory one," she sighed, "and I *must* have it! You must help me, dear! The gondoliere is so stupid, he can't understand me!"

So we started again in quest of the big buckle.

"Let me see," she said, as we sat in the gondola, and the man paused for orders—"Let me see—we had gone down a long canal, and then round a corner into a short one, and then under a bridge. I remember that, because I thought the gondoliere would knock his head against it, and I wondered if he could have got under it with my high bonnet on—oh, I know now! We came to a great dreary church and then we turned to the left—or wasn't it the right? I'm sure I don't know, but I shall remember the place when I see it."

Strange to say the buckle was found.

"I feel perfectly happy!" she said, laying her hand affectionately on my shoulder when we were sitting in the gondola again. "Isn't it a beauty? it covers half my waist! Just look!"

I looked obediently, while she tried the ornament upon her slim little figure.

"Now advise me!" she went on, "You don't think it would be prettier to loop up the skirt with it?"

"Perhaps," I said.

"Well, you may be right; but then I shall need another for the waist, and small ones for the throat and wrists—on velvet, of course."

She looked up at me to see if I was properly interested, and something — a flight of wheeling pigeons perhaps—attracted her glance higher. "What a lovely girl!" she cried. "Oh, do look, quick!" We were passing the Palazzo Barbarigo, and I had known where we were but too well.

I *would* not see her! But now

my wife forced me to look up into the eyes I had been thirsting for through all those tortured days—the eyes I shall ever see until mine are closed.

We gazed at each other as though we could never part, drinking each other's very souls—madly, wildly!

My wife had dropped her cherished buckle, and her hand, still upon my shoulder, was stooping to search among her flounces. We two were face to face alone—alone and desolate! She had turned as white as marble. A moment more and the gondola shot forward.

"I've found it!" said my wife, producing the buckle, and turning to look back at the motionless figure at the window. "Isn't she a beauty! I wonder who she is! You're not a bit enthusiastic! It's very dear and nice of you not to care to look at other women, you dear old bear!" she continued, giving my shoulder an approving pat; "but I couldn't

be jealous if I tried. It's too much trouble. She couldn't wear one of Pingat's gowns; she would be simply frightful. I wonder if that hair was all her own! That sort of color is so difficult to match, and it's dreadfully expensive."

One thing more she cared for in Venice besides hunting for jewelry and eating ices in the Piazza, and that was our long afternoon row to the Lido. She liked the soft motion, the gentle breeze, and the idleness, and would lie back in the deep cushioned gondola, or trail her little hands through the water, playing with the glitter of her rings, and looking as fair and fresh as though she had just risen from the clear depths. She talked of Paris and Trouville, and detailed to me their pungent scandal, which, because its heroines were faultlessly dressed and wore ideal gloves, did not seem so shocking as if they had been shabby.

"Now, the hats make such a difference," said she. "Give a woman a good hat and she can do almost anything, and nobody mind it."

It sounded strangely—with the sea around us and San Giorgio Maggiore rising dark and isolated from out of water of molten gold, the sky behind it one fiery fleece. Her fashionable garments looked as incongruous against this glorious background as did her ripple of worldly gossip strike tinkling and out of tune against the passionate harmony. It was like hearing "La Vie Parisienne" read from the chancel to the tones of the organ.

Almost another fortnight had gone by, and we still stayed. My wife had discovered a new curiosity dealer, and was absorbed in his treasures.

I was utterly thankful for the delay, and glad that it should be of her doing—that no fault or weakness of mine had brought it about for me to reproach myself with.

One afternoon we had rowed out to Murano, and were returning in the heavenly stillness of the coming sunset. Sea and sky seemed waiting breathless before the glory about to burst upon them, and we still, too. Slowly over the glassy ripples a strange vision moved toward us —a black pall with silver fringes sweeping the water.

"It is a funeral," said the gondoliere, indifferently. I wondered who the quiet one within might be, so gently carried to his last bed. We paused to let it pass. A priest sat behind the palled coffin, and by his side crouched a bent figure with bowed head and a bright brass badge glistening in the low rays of the sun. My heart stood still—and then I thought it had left me, and was sinking down through the water to the rest of death. I dully heard the gondoliere say, "It is the Contessina Barbarigo—she died yesterday." Then another voice—my wife's

—said, "Oh, do ask him about it! It looks so romantic."

Encouraged by her lively tone, he went on — "People say she died of a *passion*—I don't believe them! It was hunger! The Signore remembers when we used to pass her palazzo. What a beautiful woman!"

"I can't understand him," said my wife. "What is *passion?*"

"A broken heart," I answered.

"Oh! Poor thing! How *can* people die so foolish! I wonder where they are taking her to! Do let us follow—I never saw a funeral in Venice!"

I tried to say something, but my lips would not move, and the gondoliere, interpreting her gestures, rowed slowly behind the trailing pall, repeating, "What a beautiful woman! Poor girl! poor girl!" as though he and I understood each other.

On we followed to the dreary Camposanto. I do not know what I thought—or if I thought at all. Something was moaning

and weeping within me, whose grief scarcely touched me.

I remember our mounting the dank steps arm in arm, my wife and I—and their being very slippery. I remember going in and out again, of the old church —out among the black crosses— and thinking how little earth lay over the poor bodies, and then how we stood by an open grave. The bearers who had come out to the low sea door, and had lifted the coffin from the boat, laid it in its shallow resting place; and we—my wife awed and serious—heard the earth fall upon it.

It was uncovered of its pall, and looked strangely narrow and too long for the figure I had seen standing in San Marco transfigured in the sunshine. I remember, too, mechanically measuring the distances and saying to myself, "There where the black paint is uneven come the feet—there beneath the coarsely daubed cross are the folded hands,

and there lies the head with still upturned face—only an inch of wood between us! And yet I did not mourn for her; I was coldly trying to fancy how that face was looking. A thud of earth fell upon the place where the closed eyes must be, and I almost shrieked as I fancied those radiant eyes crowded with mold—those parted lips filled in with the noisome earth—and blind creeping things, such as were busy at our feet, groping through that wavy hair.

My wife's arm was still in mine, and she took the unconscious pressure for a sign to go. I turned to look back. Only a little spot on the coffin was still uncovered, just enough to lay one's lips to.

As we passed out, I felt an iron grip upon my arm. The old man held it as in a vice for one short moment, and whispered fiercely into my face, "Canaglia!"

"What was that strange old fellow saying to you? I suppose

he thought we were intruding," said my wife, as she stepped into the gondola.

"I dare say," I found voice to answer. "It sounded like something rude," she added; "but perhaps we have no right to be there."

Then, silent, we rowed homeward, the sunset blinding my eyes and brain. That night, as my wife lay quietly sleeping, I trusted myself to think of that other figure, quiet forever in the Camposanto, that white flower trodden back to earth again. How had they dressed her, in immutable calm, for her last sleep? Were those perfect hands crossed upon her breast? Was a smile upon her face? Was her glorious hair hidden from sight? From sight! Ah! no mortal sight would ever feed upon that face again! Was she beautiful still? Yes! to-night and to-morrow, perhaps, and then—then what arms could clasp her without horror? What arms

but mine? Mine would have held her close and never flinched.

"God! keep me from thinking!" I cried in my agony. At last He answered, and sent me sleep—a sleep of dreams. I was in my gondola again, looking up at her window through the sunshine. Then she was sitting beside me, her hand fast in mine, and I told her that I had dreamed she was dead; and we gazed at each other in the glory of life.

She never spoke, but we knew that we were happy. I clasped her hand more closely still, and was saying:

"Now I shall never lose you again," when I awoke. My wife's hand lay on mine, and her voice was saying: "I'm afraid you got a chill in that dreadful place, dear; you've been so restless, and your head burns. Don't forget to get some quinine to-day. It would be too bad if you were to fall ill, and we have to stay here forever!" But I did not fall ill, and that morning I told

her that we would leave in three days from then. She went eagerly to work at her packing, glad to get away, after all, and I was left much alone.

On the day before our departure she said, "My dear, you're awfully fond of me, aren't you?" and laid her silky head upon my shoulder.

I looked at her, wondering what was coming.

"I know you are," she murmured, "but I want you to be very good and show it!"

I drew a long breath of relief.

"I want you to go and get me that old silver pin we saw at Venturini's. The more I think of it the more wretched I am; and now I know I can't live without it. I've dreamt of it all these nights," and she clasped her hands imploringly. "I knew you wouldn't say no! Now go and bring it back, quickly, like a dear fellow."

I found the pin still in the dealer's dusty window, and as I

entered the shop I turned giddy, and the floor seemed to heave under my feet.

On a chair before me stood the picture—fresh and triumphantly smiling. I had fancied that face—so loving—must somehow grieve and pale for her! But it seemed to laugh at death.

"Ah, you are looking at the portrait!" said the old dealer. "Take it, Signore. It is a masterpiece. But I will not ask you its real worth, for it is not signed and you will have a great bargain. It belonged to the Conte Barbarigo—poor gentleman! His daughter died the other day, and he had to sell it to pay for her funeral. He would not have that of the poor—he was that proud. Well, he will have it himself. He was found dead in his bed this morning—and not a soldo in the house to bury him with," and he dusted the fair face, and turned it in the best light. He might have asked me any sum for it,

and he looked surprised to be paid what he wanted without haggling.

"I see the Signore is worthy of it," said he. "Here is something else: some lace—modern, but copied from the antique. The poor Contessina made it. She worked a great deal for me, and I always paid her well. Buy it for your beautiful Signora; she will like it, and it is a remembrance of the Casa Barbarigo. They were great Signori once, and you English people understand such things."

I bought the lace, but I have never given it to my wife. It lies in a sealed packet, and if the directions written upon it are obeyed it will be burned, unopened, after my death.

THE END.

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